

Great Tribulation (i.e., He cannot come at any moment during the present time), but after the Tribulation He can come on any day and at any hour.

- d. Generational Imminency holds that, following Christ's ascension, there is an indeterminate period during which Christ's Return is relatively imminent. This relative imminency continues until the last generation of human beings comes on the world scene, and then Christ's Return is generational, i.e., it will occur during that generation. Further, within that generation the Great Tribulation will occur; and after the Tribulation period His Return will be absolutely imminent for a brief period of time.

2. Imminency and the fourth section of the Olivet Discourse

The fourth section of the Discourse contains several analogies and parables that emphasize imminency. But which conception of imminency?

- a. The parable of the fig tree

Matthew 24:32-33 -- "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; even so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door."

Which of the four conceptions of imminency described above is implied in the parable of the fig tree? if "all these things" refers to the events characterizing the course of the present age, then delayed imminency would seem to be implied. if "all these things" refer to the events marking the Great Tribulation, then subsequent imminency would seem to be implied.

- b. The analogy of the days of Noah

Matthew 24:37-42 -- "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were 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 shall the coming of the Son of Man be. Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be taken, 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."

Which concept of imminency is implied in this analogy? The answer here is difficult. In the days of Noah the imminency of the Flood was delayed while Noah was preaching and building; and was subsequent to the completion of the Ark and the onloading of the animals and food. But in the days prior to the Coming of Christ, there is no event mentioned in the analogy subsequent to which Christ's Coming is imminent. The point of similarity in the analogy appears to lie in the fact that in both time periods life for unbelievers will go on as usual until the destruction overtakes them suddenly and unexpectedly, and finds them totally unprepared. The net effect of this analogy as far as believers are concerned is minimal, but either delayed or subsequent imminency could be implied.