

But now we come to the crucial question: which concept of imminency is implied in and/or fits the fourth section of the Discourse as a whole? To summarize our analysis of the individual parables/analogies:

Parable of the Fig Tree	Delayed or Subsequent
Analogy of the Days of Noah	Delayed or Subsequent
Parable of the Thief	Unconditional or Delayed
Parable of the Household Steward	Delayed
Parable of the Doorkeeper	Delayed
Parable of the Five Prudent and Five Foolish Virgins	Delayed
Parable of the Talents	Delayed

As to which concept fits the fourth section of the Discourse as a whole, we have a choice between delayed, subsequent, and unconditional imminency. However, delayed imminency appears in all, of the illustrations, and would appear to best fit the thrust of the fourth section of the Discourse as a whole. Unconditional imminency does not take into account the necessity of a brief period of time following Christ's ascension for the fulfillment of His predictions of the coming of the Spirit, the execution of Peter, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the writing of the New Testament. And subsequent imminency allows for only a brief period of absolute imminency following the Great Tribulation, and thus appears to negate the thrust of the fourth section of the Discourse, as far as the need, among Christ's disciples, of alertness and watchfulness and readiness at the present time.

3. Implications of views denying absolute imminency at the present time

If the position is taken that Christ cannot return now or for some time (which position, in effect, is taken by subsequent and generational imminency), what does this do to Christ's exhortations to alertness and watchfulness in view of the uncertainty of the time of His return? The fact of His Return is not uncertain, but the time is. He says, in effect, "You don't know when I will return, therefore you must live in constant readiness and preparedness!"

If we say, "I don't know when Christ is coming again, but I do know that He is not coming now," what does this do to Christ's exhortations in view of His imminent coming, as recorded in the fourth section of the Olivet Discourse? The thrust of this question may be seen in Robert H. Gundry's statements in *The Church and the Tribulation*, at the end of his chapter on "Expectation and Imminence". Gundry says: "The full force of the exhortations to watch for Jesus's return, then, does not require imminence of the Parousia Concerning NT exhortations to watch, we are led to the conclusion: until the tribulational events have taken place, New Testament expectancy does not mean to look for the return of the Lord as a present possibility, but to look forward to His return after the events of the tribulation."

Any view of future things that claims to represent the teaching of Scripture as a whole must incorporate two elements: