

Did Jesus Come Soon?

Revelation 22:12

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2018-10-28

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Text

12 “Take note, I am coming swiftly, and my reward is with me to give to each one according to his work. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, beginning and end, the First and the Last.” 14 (Blessed are those who do His commands, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, even to enter through the gates into the city. 15 Outside are the ‘dogs’ and the sorcerers and the fornicators and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices a lie.) 16 “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify these things to you, in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning Star. 17 Both the Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come!’ And let whoever hears say, ‘Come!’ And let whoever thirsts come; whoever wants to, let him take the water of life free of charge.

Atheists love to quote this verse and an almost identical verse in Matthew 16 in order to show that Jesus was a false prophet and the Bible is in error. They bait the Christian theologians with the question, “Did Jesus really come soon?” and I have seen theologian after theologian absolutely embarrass himself because his eschatology is wrong. His eschatology puts into a corner the Scripture never intended him to be in. One website quoted Matthew 16, which adds in the detail that some of the apostles would not die before they saw Jesus coming and beginning His kingdom. And after an analysis of the exegetical options, he said,

In very simple terms Jesus told those in front of him that he was coming back before they died. No ifs, buts or quid pro quos. I tell you that some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom... As there is not one 2000 year old man or woman known to anybody, this means that Jesus lied, his prophecy was false or the end of time happened 2000 years ago and we all missed it somehow. Jesus was a false prophet and the Bible says he should be put to death, oh wait he was.¹ You can see the mocking in his tone, but Christians struggle to answer critics like this. Atheists will pull Scriptures together that predict a soon resurrection, judgment, start of the kingdom, etc. Bertrand Russell said that if Jesus was wrong on the timing of His own coming in judgment, He couldn't be trusted on anything else that He said. After listing Revelation 22:12 and many similar verses, one atheist website said,

To anyone not already indoctrinated into Christianity reading the above passages it is crystal clear that according to the Bible Jesus was supposed to return in the first century of the Christian Era. That has not happened. Yet the Christian religion persists with the majority of its adherents still awaiting the return of their savior. How have they reconciled their scriptures to reality? There are several lines of thought in Christendom

¹ <https://www.news24.com/MyNews24/The-false-prophecies-of-Jesus-Christ-20141201>

about this.²

And that site then proceeds to systematically shred to pieces the lame arguments that Christians have put forward to explain how something supposedly imminent to us today could be said to be “soon” and imminent to the first century apostles. C. S. Lewis was embarrassed by this doctrine. He didn’t know what to do with it. But historically, Christians have had great answers to these objections. So that’s the theme of today’s sermon: Did Jesus Come Soon? And the answer obviously is “Yes.”

I. The importance of the First Judgment stated (v. 12a - ἰδοῦ)

This text gives no wiggle room. The importance of the theme of the First Judgment can be seen in the first two words, “Take note.” And actually, those two words are one word in the Greek - ἰδοῦ. Most other versions translate it as “Behold.” Pickering sometimes translates the word as “Wow!” because of the astonishing things or the important things that the word usually introduces. But this is a legitimate translation. He says, “Take note” to show that verse 12 is going to repeat something that has been of central importance to this book. Any time that word occurs, you should pay attention to the verse that follows it. It’s one of the reasons I decided that I needed to focus entirely on this verse, rather than trying to tackle all of verses 12-17. And we will see shortly that the central theme of this whole paragraph is the First Judgment and the Dawn of the Kingdom. Many Christians no longer see AD 70 as being something of great importance. But throughout the New Testament this soon-to-happen coming of Christ in Judgment was declared to be of critical importance. So I think I am justified in spending an entire sermon on this verse. So He says, “Take note.”

II. Christ’s personal involvement in the First Judgment (v. 12b)

Next, we see Christ’s personal involvement in the First Judgment. Christ says, “I am coming swiftly...” He won’t just send His angels to bring this judgment. That might be an easy way to escape from the dilemma that the atheists pose on this verse. No, Jesus says that He himself would be personally involved.

² <https://blacknonbelievers.wordpress.com/jesus-failed-prophecy-about-his-return/>

III. The certainty is emphasized with a three-fold assertion (vv. 7,12,20)

And lest people have doubts that this could happen soon, God establishes the certainty of this coming in judgment by giving a three-fold testimony in this Epilogue. It is like He is putting His very reputation at stake with a three-fold promise. In verse 7 Jesus said, "Take note, I am coming swiftly!" In verse 12 He says, "Take note, I am coming swiftly." In verse 20 He will say, "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming swiftly!' Oh yes!! Come, Lord Jesus!"

I know that many people quote these words and apply them to the Second Judgment at the end of history, but the Second Judgment is consistently spoken of with terminology that means the exact opposite. It is spoken of as being after the kingdom (which would not be soon on anyone's interpretation), and as being far-off, distant, and after a long delay. Only a First-Judgment interpretation does justice to the words. So we are not escaping from the atheists' so-called problem passage. We are addressing it head-on.

IV. Which coming in Judgment is being mentioned here? (v. 12b)

Now, of course, I'm acting as if I have already settled the question of which coming is being referred to. Obviously not all Evangelicals agree. Perhaps a majority of modern commentators disagree with me. They think that this coming is a still-future Second Coming. That's what gets them in trouble. But atheists will attack my position as well by claiming that there is no historical evidence that Jesus came in judgment in the first century. But before I deal with the atheist, let me quickly dispose of the two arguments Futurists use to say this verse must refer to a future Second Coming.

It's not the word "coming itself." Futurists admit that the word "coming" by itself does not settle the timing of verse 12. That Greek word ἔρχομαι is used of historical judgments on nations, Jesus coming to the apostle Paul at night in a vision, coming to a church after having abandoned it, etc. For example, everyone agrees that John 14 refers to a personal coming, even though it uses the same word ἔρχομαι for the "coming." Those verses in John 14 say, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you (John 14:18) "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." (John 14:23) Likewise Revelation 3:20 says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone

hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” Or Revelation 2:5, which says to a church, ”Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place - unless you repent.” (Rev. 2:5) And there are many similar Scriptures that show that the word ἔρχομαι or “coming” does not settle the question of timing.

A. The strongest arguments for a future coming:

Verses 6-17 come after verse 5. Reasons why that does not work.

But here are two reasons why most take this verse to refer to our future. The first reason is that they mistakenly think that verses 6-20 happen after the events of verse 5. They fail to see that structurally verse 6 begins a new section. But for the sake of argument, let’s assume they are right; let’s assume that verse 6 is the Second Coming - then they still have a problem because verse 5 happens after history is finished. Therefore, since verse 6 is on the last day of history (on their interpretation), verse 6 of necessity occurs before verse 5. You see, from chapter 21:1-22:5 John is describing the New Jerusalem after history is finished and after the eternal state has come. So even on their interpretation this coming does not happen after verse 5; it happens before verse 5. The only question that needs to be settled is how much before verse 5 does it occur? It is clear even on their interpretation that this is going backwards in time. That means that the placement of verse 6 and all of these other verses after verse 5 has nothing to do with sequence. It’s simply a new section.

Well, it’s all cleared up once you see the structure of the book. I’ve included a copy on the back side of your outlines. The structure of the book shows that verse 6 is starting a brand new section. We are no longer dealing with the seven major sections of the book. This is the epilogue and in terms of the chiasmic structure it is parallel to the prologue, which occurred in AD 66.

So it is helpful to remind ourselves of what the bulk of the book dealt with in chapters 1-20. It dealt with lots of trouble and turmoil and wars and rumors of wars. Anyone who had been familiar with the Olivet Discourse and the hundreds of prophecies in the Old Testament about the beginning of the kingdom would know that Christ’s coming in Judgment would be preceded by darkness, tyranny, warfare, evil, death. It would have been easy to become terrified by what the Bible calls the labor pains leading up to the birth of the kingdom. Who likes labor pains? Nobody does. The Old

Testament predicted deep darkness before the kingdom would be birthed.

Now, here is a legitimate objection: Was not the kingdom conceived and legally established at the cross? Yes, it was. Absolutely. But the baby is still in the womb; it is still in darkness. Was it growing in the womb (so to speak) from Pentecost on? Yes. But the birth of the kingdom actually happens in AD 70. I have become more and more convinced of that fact. And we will look at a number of Scriptures that prove that later on in the sermon. But let's go on to their second argument.

They claim that there is only one Day of Judgment, and that day is future.

Their second strongest argument is that there is only one Day of Judgment and that day is future. Here is where Partial Preterists like us once again agree with Premillennialists in saying that there are two days of judgment. There is not just one day like the Amillennialists claim. Daniel is quite clear that there is a First Judgment at the beginning of the Kingdom and there is a Second Judgment on the last day of the Kingdom when the kingdom of Christ is handed over to the Father.

And there are numerous Scriptures that show a judgment at the beginning of the kingdom. Daniel 7:22 says, "the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom." Notice that that judgment came before the saints begin to possess the kingdom, or possess the land of Canaan. Acts 17:30-31 says, "God... has appointed a day on which He is about to judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." I'll be reading more of those kinds of passages in a moment. But these two arguments are actually not that strong. The vast majority of Christians hold to two judgments.

B. The strongest arguments that this is an AD 70 coming

The word soon (ταχύ)

Let's quickly look at several arguments of why this is the First Judgment. He says, "Take note, I am coming swiftly." The Greek word for "swiftly" is ταχύ, and it means "shortly" or "soon." Here's the key point - Jesus doesn't say, "Take note, I am coming after 2000 years." No. The coming in Judgment that He describes here is soon. And atheists have a heyday when Christians try to make 2000 years seem like it soon in God's sight. Then

what is “long” in God’s sight? Does “soon” mean the same as “after a long time” in God’s sight? That word by itself ought to settle the question of timing, but there’s more.

The phrase, “My reward is with Me”

Meaning of “reward”

The phrase, “My reward is with Me” also shows something that is about to happen. The word for “reward” (μισθός) is wages, and the language here is presenting a picture of an employer who is coming out to His employees carrying in his hand the bag of coins from which he will pay his employees. He is not in the future going to go into the house to get the bag of coins; He is coming out with the bag in His hands. So the very imagery is a picture of a payment that is about to happen. He is ready to pay.

A quotation from Isaiah 40:10, 49:4; 62:11

But when you realize that this phrase is actually a direct quote of the Old Testament, then imminence is doubly confirmed. Commentators point out that this is a quotation from Isaiah that is repeated three times in that book - in Isaiah 40:10, 49:4; 62:11. And each of those passages indicate a first century judgment and long history afterwards of God advancing the Gospel. For example, immediately after Isaiah 40:10 speaks about the Lord coming and His reward being with Him (same words as used here), the next verse says,

He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young.

It is clearly dealing with ongoing New Covenant history. There are pregnant moms who are being gently led before they give birth, and there are other newborn babies that have just been born to moms. It’s not language of eternity. So it is yet another reason for seeing this as a reference to the First Judgment (which does have history after it), not the Second Judgment (which ends history).

The titles of Jesus that explain verse 12 (v. 13,16)

Third, we will see next week that the titles given to Jesus definitely highlight the beginning or dawning of the Kingdom. Every one of the titles show this. The title “the first and the last” is a quote of a title that is used of God three times in Isaiah, and each time it is used in connection with the beginning of the kingdom. So not only is Jesus calling Himself Yehowah God (because those are titles that are only appropriate for Yehowah), but He is also saying

that He fulfills the meaning of that phrase with regard to the kingdom. Well, when you read through each of the chapters where that title is used, you see that the titles give courage to God's people that Yehowah's Servant will bring light out of darkness and will rule the world that seems to be in such turmoil. It shows the beginning of something new.

Of course, some apply the Servant language to Cyrus rather than to Jesus. So their interpretation of Isaiah 41:4 is that God will raise up Cyrus to gather the exiles to Israel and to begin the kingdom once again. But either way, the same point is made. Whether it is a reference to Israel (as a type or a symbol of the New Covenant Kingdom) or whether it is a reference to the New Covenant kingdom itself (the antitype) it is still dealing with the birth to a kingdom out of darkness, not the end of the kingdom. Isaiah 44:6 and 48:12 are the same. We will look at those titles on another Sunday, but it is crystal clear that they refer to the dawning of the kingdom not the end of the kingdom. So verse 12 is the Alpha of the kingdom, not the Omega. He will be the Omega of the kingdom at the Second Coming when every enemy will have been put down. But this coming refers to the Alpha, the first, the beginning of the kingdom.

But the title in verse 16, "Bright Morning Star" is so obviously a reference to the dawning of the kingdom that it is hard to miss. The morning star appeared during the darkest hours of the night and signaled the fact that dawn was about to come. Everything before AD 70 would be the pre-dawn darkest time when the morning star shone, and everything after AD 70 would be the beginning light as Sun begins to rise. Jesus in His earthly ministry was the morning star; after AD 70 He is the rising sun. And as history progresses, the light of the Sun will just keep shining brighter as the kingdom grows. So this context also points to the fact that the Judgment spoken of in verse 12 is the First Judgment not the Second Judgment.

If ἰδοῦ points to a central theme of the book, then this refers to the book's primary message (First Judgment) rather than its secondary message (Second Judgment)

Next, if the Greek word "ἰδοῦ," shows that this is the central theme of the book, then one would expect this coming to refer to the book's primary message of First Judgment rather than its secondary message of Second Judgment. The heart of the book dealt with the trouble and turmoil and wars and rumors of wars leading up to AD 70. These were all labor pains before the kingdom would be birthed.

This first judgment was a coming of Christ (v. 12c) that is identical to the coming described in 1:7

But the next argument is that exactly the same wording was previously used in chapter 1:7 - which we saw clearly referred to the First Judgment. That verse indicated that it was not a coming to the earth (as will happen at the Second Coming), but a coming on the clouds of heaven while there were still distinct tribes of Israel. Yet the same verse indicated that every eye would see Him. This would not be a secret coming.

Witnessed by first century people

Which leads to my next point. If it is not a secret coming, then one would expect that there should be some eyewitness accounts from the first century showing that it did indeed occur. And there are. There were Roman, Jewish, and Christian witnesses to the fact that Jesus did indeed come on the clouds of heaven. I've given you quite a few testimonies in the past. I'll just review two of them today. An ancient Jewish author by the name of Yossipon said, ...Now it happened after this that there was seen from above over the Holy of Holies for the whole night the outline of a man's face, the like of whose beauty had never been seen in all the land, and his appearance was quite awesome.³

So this non-Christian Jew said that the people in the first century saw the appearance of a man of stupendous size in the sky, and having a beauty that was awe-inspiring. Everyone saw it. But he goes on to point out that this man was not alone. He was accompanied by an army of angels. He said, there...

...were seen chariots of fire and horsemen, a great force flying across the sky near to the ground coming against Jerusalem and all the land of Judah, all of them horses of fire and riders of fire... the priests heard within the Temple something like the sound of men going and the sound of men marching in a multitude going into the Temple, and a terrible and mighty voice was heard speaking: "Let's go and leave this House."⁴

The sights and the sounds of Christ coming in Judgment were impossible for anyone to miss. As I have mentioned before, this unbelieving Jew would have had no reason to make this kind of stuff up - especially since it could be used by Christians to prove the truth of Revelation and of Christianity. It is a clear reference to Jesus coming with His angels to bring the First Judgment, just as He had promised that He would do. The atheists are absolutely wrong. There is abundant evidence of Jesus coming in the first century.

3 Steven B. Bowman (Translator), *Sepher Yosippon, A Medieval History of Ancient Israel* (from the critical Hebrew edition of David Flusser, translated by Steven B. Bowman), prepublication manuscript. The publisher of intent is Harvard Loeb Classical Library.

4 Ibid.

One more quote. This one from a fourth century Christian historian. He is a very respected church father, Ambrose of Milan. Based on first century manuscripts that he had in his possession, he said,

Also after many days a certain figure appeared of tremendous size, which many saw, just as the books of the Jews have disclosed, and before the setting of the sun there were suddenly seen in the clouds chariots and armed battle arrays, by which cities of all Judaea and its territories were invaded. Moreover in the celebration itself of the Pentecost the priests entering the interior of the temple at night time, that they might celebrate the usual sacrifices, asserted themselves at first to have felt a certain movement and a sound given forth, afterwards even to have heard shouted in a sudden voice “we cross over from here.”⁵

But he too testifies to the human figure of tremendous size leading the armies of heaven. This was Jesus coming within one generation just as He promised that He would. And since John wrote Revelation early in AD 66, we can say that it did indeed happen very soon - within months. And earlier I gave accounts of this coming by Roman historians as well.

All of this is parallel to Matthew 16:27-28

But please turn to a parallel passage in Matthew 16. This is a passage that speaks of Jesus coming soon to reward each one. In fact, several atheist sites quoted this passage. Commentators point out that the verbal parallels show that both passages are speaking about the event.

Beginning to read at verse 27, Jesus says, “For the Son of Man will come...” Let’s stop there for a moment because if you don’t read Greek, you are going to completely miss the significance of those words - at least in this translation. The word “will” is the Greek word μέλλω and means “about to.” It is sad that so many Futurist translations completely ignore the Greek word μέλλω. It refers to something that is on the verge of happening. It is usually translated as “about to.” The New King James ignored it here. And what is odd about that is that the word μέλλω is at the beginning of the Greek sentence, which in Greek grammar means that it emphasizes the “about-to-ness” of this verse. That’s how Greek emphasizes a concept - it puts the most important word at the beginning of the sentence. It’s not a throw-away word. So let me read it again, translating it literally.

27 For the Son of Man is about to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. 28 Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His

5 Pseudo-Hegesippus, chapter 44, online text, public domain, translated from the Latin by Wade Blocker. This section corresponds to pages 391-394 in the Latin critical text edited by Vincente Ussani, *Hegesippi qui dicitur historiae libri V*, found in the *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* series, volume 66, (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1932). Many believe that Ambrose of Milan composed this document.

kingdom.

Just as Revelation 22:12 says that Jesus is coming soon to reward each one, this verse shows two things that require the judgment be the First Judgment, not the Second Judgment. The word μέλλω absolutely requires that it happen soon. Second, the fact that some of his disciples would die before it happened and some of those standing in front of Him would not die but would see it, indicates that this judgment had to happen before the last apostle died, or at least before the last of those in that crowd died. In other words, it had to happen within one generation. That sentence means that some had to die (ruling out the Transfiguration interpretation that happened six days later) and some would not die (ruling out the Second Coming and the Second Judgment in our future). This is a Judgment that would happen within that generation then living.

And of course, isn't that what Matthew 24 was predicting? He predicted that the current generation would not pass away till all the things in the previous verses were fulfilled - including a coming of Christ in the sky and sending His angels to gather the elect from the earth wherever their bodies were scattered.

C. That Christ did indeed come soon in judgment can be seen by the following passages that use μέλλω (about to), ἐγγίζω (very near), and τάχος (soon):

But lest you think that the imminence of this coming in Judgment can only be proved with a few verses (and therefore may be suspect), I have listed a bunch of Scriptures that use the Greek word μέλλω (about to), the Greek word ἐγγίζω (very near), and the Greek word τάχος (soon). This chart might be very helpful to you in the future. I think these verses should settle the fact that this is a doctrine scattered throughout the New Testament. I don't have time to read all of them, but let me read a select few of the ones in your outline.

AD 30 - Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; 12:32; 16:27; 24:6; Mark 1:15; 13:4; Luke 3:7; 10:9,11; 18:8; 21:7,28,36

Over and over John the Baptist and Jesus promised that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, or near. It wasn't there yet, but it was near. But He also commanded His disciples to preach, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." So when the disciples went out preaching it still wasn't there yet, but it was near.

In Luke 18:8 he promised that He would soon come to avenge His saints.

That's a kind of judgment. And He had a question about whether there would be any faith to ask for judgment on that day.

But Luke 21 is particularly clear. The immediately context of the verses I am going to read are that Jerusalem will be surrounded by armies; that the city would be leveled, and that Christians would escape the city before that happened. And Jesus said, "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near." That is a visible coming of Christ in the sky in connection with Jerusalem being surrounded by armies. And He mentions redemption. The first resurrection was the redemption of their bodies according to Romans 8, so there was a soon or near aspect of redemptive history. It is clear that the phrase, "your redemption draws near" happened in AD 70.

AD 51 - Acts 17:30-31

But I am going to skip over most of the verses in the Gospels and jump forward twenty years to Acts 17:31. In about AD 51, Paul preached saying, Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He is about to judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.

If this was the Second Judgment, he would not have used the word μέλλω. So there is a near or soon judgment.

AD 54 - 1 Cor. 7:29,31; 10:11

Jumping forward three years to AD 54, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7:29, "the time is short." What time is short? In context, he is referring to two things. Most of them wouldn't survive the next few years because they were about to enter the greatest tribulation ever. Second, Judgment Day would initiate such great changes that verse 31 says, "the form of this world is passing away." That process would begin in AD 70.

AD 55 - Rom. 8:18; 13:11-12; 16:20

One year later, in AD 55, Paul said in Romans 8:18, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which is about to be revealed in us." Again, the Greek word μέλλω. There was something glorious that was about to happen. I think a resurrection is certainly glorious as were other aspects of that First Judgment. It was about to happen. As we get closer to AD 70, you will see more and more emphasis and repetition of this doctrine of imminence.

Romans 13:11-12 says, “And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand.” Again the imagery of the night when only the Morning Star was shining giving way very soon to the Day when the Sun of Righteousness would rise. Twice in those verses the word ἐγγίζω is used. The dictionary defines ἐγγίζω as something approaching or drawing near. For salvation to be almost at hand means that some part of redemptive history must be very close to happening - and that part of redemptive history (according to the same book of Romans) was the resurrection of Old Testament saints, which Romans speaks of as the redemption of the body. If you don't have a resurrection in AD 70, then I fail to see how redemption happened in AD 70. Partial Preterists like Gentry deny a resurrection in AD 70, but seeing the first resurrection as literal and as happening in AD 70 resolves imminent redemptive issues in numerous Scriptures. And we looked at that redemptive part of history in depth in Revelation 20.

In Romans 16:20 Paul says, “And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.” Even the binding of Satan was said to be a part of redemptive history, and it was about to happen. We have seen in past sermons that the saints judged Satan in AD 70. To insist that Satan won't be bound until some time future to is to make mockery of the word “shortly.” How many times did Paul say that he was going to do something soon (same word) or ask others do do something soon? They obviously knew what Paul meant. Can you imagine, when Paul tells Timothy, to come to Him quickly (the same word for soon), Timothy responds by saying, “Yeah, I'll be there quickly in 2000 years.” Nobody would interpret those words that way, yet when the same word in the same book is used of Christ's coming, it suddenly means far off. All of these verses confirm that the First Judgment and First Resurrection was indeed imminent. Where Full Preterists don't take seriously the far away and distant passages, Futurists don't take seriously the soon and near passages. They are quite different from each other.

AD 58 - Eph. 1:21; Phil. 4:5; Col. 2:17

In the next year (AD 58 - just eight years away from the coming of Christ in judgment), Ephesians 1:21 contrasts the Old Covenant age that they were still living in with an age that was about to come. It says that Jesus was raised “far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is about

to come.” Keep in mind that Hebrews 8:13 says that the Old Covenant age was growing old and was almost ready to vanish away. But it hadn’t vanished away yet. The Old Covenant age was still around in AD 66. Was there an age about to come? Yes. AD 70 would end the old age and fully usher in the new. And that was only eight years away. On anyone’s timetable, eight years is something about to happen, whereas 2000 years is not.

In the same year, Philippians 4:5 said, “The Lord is at hand.” Wow! That sure sounds like imminent coming. And Colossians 2:17 said that some of the Old Covenant types were “a shadow of things about to come.” Though the kingdom came legally in AD 30, it began to be possessed in AD 70. And this was symbolized in the Old Testament by Israel. Israel was given the kingdom when they crossed the Red Sea on the Festival of Firstfruits (same day that Jesus rose) and they were resourced for their kingdom at Sinai 50 days later on the day of Pentecost, but they only started to possess the kingdom forty years later when they crossed the Jordan and entered the land.

So you have two word pictures to help you see how the kingdom can be present in the cross and resurrection and yet be said to start in some sense in AD 70. A baby exists in the womb, but is born and interacts with the world nine months later. Israel became a kingdom after leaving Egypt but began to possess the kingdom forty years later. There is no contradiction.

AD 60 - Acts 24:15,25

Let’s look at a few more Scriptures. Around AD 60 Paul spoke of an imminent resurrection in Acts 24:15. He said, “I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there is about to be a resurrection of the dead...” There is that Greek word μέλλω again. Still speaking to Felix, verse 25 says, “Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment about to come...” So there was both a resurrection and a judgment about to come when he spoke those words in AD 60. After 4000 years of longing for this resurrection, it is not a stretch to say that ten years is something about to happen. But it would be a stretch to say that “about to” refers to something 2000 years or more later.

AD 61? James 2:1; 5:8,9

One year later, in AD 61, James 5:9 says this: “Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!” Wow! What a powerful image of imminency - He is ready to come into the courtroom. Yet Futurists want us to believe He has been standing at the door about to bring judgment for the last 2000 years. The

previous verse to the one I just quoted tied it with the imminent coming of Christ, saying, “You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.” So He is at the door and His coming is at hand. James also says, “So speak and so do as those who are about to be judged by the law of liberty.” Again, the Greek words μέλλω and ἐγγίζω are used by James to show that the First Judgment is near. We are not just talking about a few scattered difficult verses. We are talking about a doctrine of imminent judgment that is pervasive in the New Testament. Until Christians get these verses right, they are not going to have a good apologetic for the atheists.

And just as a side note, I used to date James to AD 45, but I have run across some very persuasive evidence that it was written sometime between AD 60 and 61. If that is true, judgment was indeed just around the corner.

AD 65 - 1 Pet. 4:5,7,17; 5:1; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 Tim. 4:8; 6:19; 2 Tim. 4:1

In AD 65 1 Peter chapter 4 said, “They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead...But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers” (vv. 5,7). In less than a year, the ax would fall on Old Covenant Israel and temple with nothing being left. Of course, it wasn’t just Israel that would be judged. 1 Peter 4:17 says, “For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” The tribulation they were facing was the Great Tribulation. Jesus predicted that it would be greater than any previous persecution that the church had ever experienced in history or would ever experience for the rest of history. It had already come.

But 1 Peter 5:1 predicts an imminent time when the church would reverse this process from defeat to glory. And yes, there was a time when the church was ordained to be defeated. Never again after AD 70, but before that time Daniel 7:21 says, the “horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them.” Satan was winning. But from AD 70 and on there would be non-stop victory for the church. Anyway, 1 Peter 5:1 says, “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that is about to be revealed.” Something glorious was about to be revealed in AD 70. With Scriptures like these, you can see why many of the Puritans were convinced that AD 70 was a pivotal time in redemptive history.

2 Peter 2:1 says, “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and are

bringing upon themselves a destruction soon.” That’s the literal translation of the word *τάχος*. Those persecutors were about to be destroyed very soon. And they were.

2 Timothy was written that same year (AD 65), about one year before Christ’s appearance in the sky with chariots. And 2 Timothy 4:1 says, “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who is about to judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom.” Wow! How could you get more clear than that? What is about to happen in that verse? Christ’s appearing, His kingdom, and His judgment. Hopefully you are beginning to see that what Revelation is talking about is part of the warp and woof of the Gospels and the Epistles. There is clear evidence of a first century Judgment that Jesus Himself would personally bring to usher in His Kingdom.

AD 66 - 1 John 2:18; Heb. 1:14; 2:5; 6:5; 9:11; 10:25,27,37; 13:14; Rev. 1:1; 1:19; 2:5,10,16; 3:10,11; 6:11; 8:13; 10:7,25; 12:4

In the same year that Revelation was written, 1 John 2:18 said, “Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.” This was written just before Christ was seen in the sky, and just before the last opportunity that anyone would have to escape from Jerusalem. But if the whole last 2000 years is the last hour, then timing statements have been rendered meaningless by these exegetes - absolutely meaningless. If the “last hour,” “about to,” “soon,” “near,” “at the doors,” and other terms of imminency can mean 2000 years away, they can mean 5000 or 10,000 or 100,000. I take them much more literally. All of these imminency indicators show an increasing nearness as they approached AD 70. And certainly “the last hour” indicates that the proverbial clock was about to strike midnight or doomsday.

Early in the same year Hebrews says about angels, “Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who are about to inherit salvation?” (Heb. 1:14) If salvation is about to come, there must be something significant that happens in redemptive history. It’s not the Second Resurrection; it’s the First. Revelation 20 is clear that the Second Resurrection doesn’t happen till the 1000 years if finished. That is not imminent by any stretch of the imagination. This is the ammunition you need to have against atheists. We take the Bible seriously in its every jot and tittle.

In Hebrews 2:5, he says, “For He has not put the habitable world (οἰκουμένην) about to (μέλλω) come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels.” By using the word οἰκουμένην, he is not indicating eternity, but the possession of the Roman world in history. And he indicates that this inheritance of the inhabitable world that is about to happen will be put under Christ’s feet, not under the feet of angels. 1 Corinthians 15 is quite clear that Christ hands over the kingdom to the Father on the last day of history. That is clearly not the time when all things are put under His feet. But this is talking about something being put under Christ’s feet imminently - the Greek word μέλλω. So it has to refer to the beginning of the kingdom. Jesus will gradually inherit all things. But again, it is about to come.

In chapter 6, Hebrews spoke of Jews who “have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age about to come” (6:5). What is an age that is about to come? Not eternity. That hasn’t come yet after 2000 years. He is talking of the age of the kingdom when the proverbial Second Joshua will take the conquest of Canaan. That happened 40 years after Israel’s redemption just as this happens 40 years after Christ’s resurrection.

Chapter 9:11 says, “But Christ came as High Priest of the good things about to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.” He is talking about the heavenly temple and heavenly Jerusalem. That was under construction since AD 30 but was about to be finished in AD 70.

In chapter 10 he said, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (v. 25). That phrase, “the Day” refers to Judgment Day. And the word for “approaching” is ἐγγίζω, or drawing near. He is saying that Judgment Day is very near. In verse 27 he speaks of the Jews of that generation receiving “a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which is about to devour the adversaries” (10:27). Who were the adversaries? Everyone agrees that the Hebrew Christians were being persecuted by the unbelieving Jewish authorities. And that verse indicates that those Jewish persecutors or adversaries were about to be devoured by Christ’s judgment.

Verse 37 says, “For yet a little while [2000 years does not seem like a little while - “For yet a little while”], and He who is coming will come and will not tarry.” The word for “tarry” means to wait a long time. Notice that His coming will not tarry but that He will come in a “little while.” 2000 years later is definitely tarrying, so he is not talking about the Second Coming.

There is a first century coming of Jesus that will not tarry. Nothing else makes sense of that verse.

Speaking of the New Jerusalem, which was still under construction, chapter 13:14 says, “For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one that is about to come.” So you can see that the closer we get to the date of Judgment Day, the more repetition and warning is given about the coming Judgment. Hebrews is absolutely full of it.

And of course, I’ve given numerous Scriptures from Revelation as well - written in the same year. I’m not going to read all of those. Let me just give you two samples. Revelation 1:19 says, “Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which are about to take place after this.” In 3:10 He tells the church of Philadelphia, “Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.” Etc.

Now I know these are a lot of Scriptures, but this verse has been so mishandled by evangelicals that it is important we understand it. Because it has been attacked by atheists, it is good for you to have ammo to show them wrong. Liberals mock at the idea that Christ’s future judgment is near, soon, about to happen, or at hand. They say that the Bible is mistaken, and your average Evangelical interpretation supports their contention. But every one of those imminent passages was fulfilled imminently - in one generation. And as we have gone through this book I have tried to show that there is abundant historical documentation for every detail that was predicted to happen soon. So those verses deal with the Futurists.

Let me give a sampling that deal with the Second Coming so that you can see the contrast. And it is a stark contrast. These are verses that Full Preterism tries to explain away. None of these are soon. Matthew 24:45 speaks of the ruler telling his servant to give his household food in due season - a phrase that indicates ongoing time and seasons. Verse 48 speaks of delaying His coming back. The Greek word is $\chi\rho\nu\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$, which the dictionary defines as “to stay away for a long time.” That does not seem like near, soon, about to happen. Matthew 25:5 says, “while the bridegroom was delayed,” again using that Greek word for staying away for a long time. This quite opposite in definition to the words for imminency. Matthew 25:14 shows Jesus going to a far country and verse 19 says, “After a long time the Lord of those servants came...”

Let’s look at the start and the end of the wedding feast. In previous sermons

we have seen that the feast starts in AD 70 and ends on the last day of history. Matthew 22:7-8 is quite clear that the wedding supper was ready after the destruction of Jerusalem, and after that they kept inviting more people to that wedding supper. So during this whole age we are inviting people to the wedding supper. The consummation of the marriage doesn't happen until the last person is saved. But Luke 12:36 begins the parable of the faithful servant by saying that we should "be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding..." This is not going to the wedding supper in AD 70. This is returning from the wedding at the end of history. And verse 45 goes on to talk about that coming as delayed for a long time (Χρονίζει).

Full Preterists try to say that this is referring to the forty year delay between 30 and 70. But we have just read a bunch of passages that say there is no delay during those years. Those years are said to be soon. So Hebrews 10:37 says there is a coming that won't be delayed and three passages (Matt. 24:48; 25:5; Luke 24:45) that talk about a coming that is delayed, all using the same Greek word. Won't be delayed seems different from will be delayed. Wouldn't you agree? Yet Full Preterists are forced to say that won't be delayed passages are referring to the same timetable as will be delayed. Bizarrely, they are forced to say that the short period of one generation is the same time period as the 1000 years. So both Futurism and Full Preterism play fast and loose with the timing indicators.

Romans 8:19 says that the whole creation is groaning (and he is not just talking about us and our bodies - the whole creation is groaning) and waiting for the revealing of the sons of God. There is a Second Judgment Day that will finish what was begun on the First Judgment Day, and we saw before that on the second Judgment Day the whole creation will be renewed. That hasn't happened yet. Revelation 20 shows that there is a resurrection at the beginning and the end of the kingdom. The beginning is imminent; the end is not.

Hebrews 9:28 says that there are those who will have to wait for Christ to appear a second time for salvation. Hebrews 10:13 says that Jesus is "waiting till His enemies are made His footstool." He is waiting. 1 Corinthians 15 and Colossians 1 both indicate that all things in this creation must be redeemed and placed under Christ's feet before He comes back. That's a long process. 2 Peter 3:9 does not deny that Christ will be slow to end history. He just says that His reason for slowness is not the critic's reason for slowness. His slowness is because He is not willing that any should perish. He will not end His kingdom until the last of the elect has

believed. The hope of the Second Coming is said to be something that we will wait for with patience.

V. Applications

So back to Revelation 22:12, some people object, “Well, if that is the case, we have no comfort here. This passage is irrelevant to us.” But that is actually a pretty ridiculous argument that would relegate most of the Bible to the ash heap of irrelevance. Think about it: Does the fact that every prophecy about Christ’s birth has already been fulfilled make those passages irrelevant to us? No. We delight in the Incarnation passages. Are the fulfilled prophecies about Christ’s death irrelevant to us? Obviously not. So let me outline four reasons why this is very applicable.

A. If it was fulfilled perfectly, we have encouragement to believe that every prophecy of Scripture will be perfectly fulfilled.

First, seeing hundreds of detailed prophecies fulfilled to a “t” in the first century gives us confidence that we can trust everything in the Bible. It used to be that liberals would try to show hundreds of Old Testament prophecies about Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome as never having been fulfilled and therefore being false prophecies. But over and over archeology showed how stupid the liberal critics were. Understanding the absolute precision with which ancient prophecies were fulfilled gives me confidence in everything that the Bible says. As Jesus said about the Bible, “The Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). It is infallible, inerrant, useful, and trustworthy. But if “soon” means 2000 years or more later, it gives occasion to the enemies of the Bible to attack it once again.

B. If the First Judgment began the kingdom, then we are in the kingdom.

The second application is that if the First Judgment began the kingdom as Daniel 7 and so many passages insist, then we are in the kingdom. That means we ought to live as kingdom citizens and dispossess the Canaanites, so to speak. Obviously, we dispossess them in the New Covenant by converting them to the Gospel and training them in the Bible. But these are kingdom times. But if we are in the kingdom, then kingdom law applies, and every nation should be brought to obedience to Christ’s law. Well, isn’t that what the Great Commission is about? If we are in the kingdom, then it affects our view of everything.

C. If this coming refers to the dawning of the kingdom, then we can have comfort that things will keep growing brighter into noon day sunshine.

Third, if this coming refers to the dawning of the kingdom, then we can have comfort that things will continue to get better over history. Anyone who wants to live 2000 years ago rather than now doesn't have an appreciation for increased lifespans, better medicine, common comforts that even kings couldn't afford before, technological advancements, speed of travel, cheaper food, etc. etc. Even 200 years ago you had to work most of your hours just to survive. And people say that things are getting worse and worse? I question that. The kingdom is growing. There are 2.4 billion Christians in the world today compared to 3000 in Acts 2. On anybody's scheme, that is massive kingdom growth over the last 2000 years.

But that growth is not yet finished. Psalm 72 says that eventually every king of every nation will serve Jesus. Isaiah and Jeremiah say that every person will be saved and eventually no one will have to say to his neighbor, "know the Lord," for they shall all know the Lord from the least of them to the greatest of them. 1 Corinthians 15 says that Jesus must remain at the right hand of the Father until all enemies are put under His feet.

If AD 70 was the new-born baby, perhaps we are in the toddler stage of history. If you think of the church as a toddler, you can put up with a lot more. One thing we can be assured of is that Isaiah 9:7 is true when it says, "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end." Those are encouraging words.

D. If Christ gave rewards to first century saints, we can have confidence that He will give rewards to all His saints. We can also be assured that our labors in the Lord are not in vain.

And then finally, if Christ gave rewards to first century saints, we can have confidence that He will give rewards to all of His saints. We can rest assured that our labors in the Lord are not in vain. He is a generous Master who keeps good care of His household. The same Christ who promised to come to start His kingdom will come again when He is completed everything prophesied. That gives us confidence in the future. Amen.