

52. Although the prophecy of the Rapture indicates it is imminent, it does not reveal any catalyst for the event. This is known only to the Father (Mark 13:32d). Its execution is in the divine decree about which we are not aware.
53. Therefore, to what conclusion are we forced? The Rapture, being eminent, may occur in our lifetimes, but it may not. Consequently, we are to use its imminency as a motivation to grow in grace, advance to spiritual maturity, and make spiritual growth our top priority.
54. In James 5:8, the coming of the Lord at the Rapture is indicated by the noun *parousía* [pär-ü-sĕ-ə].
55. It has been transliterated into the English dictionaries and capitalized, “Parousia,” and defined as the Second Coming. In some contexts, it does, but in others, which we are noting, it refers to the Rapture of the Church.
56. What follows is an interesting and insightful synopsis of the words *parousía*—“coming”—and *engízō* —“near”—regarding James’s comments on the Rapture:

In [James 5] verse 7, James urged believers to be patient in view of the fact of the Lord’s coming. Now he bases his exhortation to patience and spiritual firmness on the nearness of the Lord’s coming. The verb James uses, *engízō* (“is near”), occurs elsewhere in the New Testament in similar eschatological contexts.

We need to say something about the “nearness” idea as we find it here in James. Not much is gained from a consideration of the verb *engízō* itself—it denotes simply “nearness” in space or time. But what is crucial is to understand this “nearness” in the appropriate temporal framework: salvation history. With the death and resurrection of Jesus and pouring out of the Spirit, the “last days” have been inaugurated. This final age of salvation will find its climax in the return of Christ in glory. But—and here is the crucial point—the length of this age is unknown. Not even Jesus knew how long the “last days” would last (cf. Mark 13:32).¹ What this means is that the return of Christ, as the next event in the salvation-historical timetable, is, from the time of the early church to our own day, “near,” or “imminent.”

¹ “But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.”

Every generation of Christians lives (or should live!) with the consciousness that the *parousía* could occur at any time and that one needs to make decisions and choose values based on that realization.

So it was as true in James's day as it is in ours: we need to *be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.*²

57. Our research into the doctrine of the *parousía* leaves us with the principle that James and the writer of Hebrews emphasize:

James 5:7 Therefore be patient [aorist active imperative of μακροθυμέω (*makrothuméō*): faith rest], brethren, until the Rapture of the church. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.

v. 8 You too be patient; facilitate [aorist active imperative of στηρίζω (*stēρίζō*)] your soul's doctrinal inventory, for the Rapture [παρουσία (*parousía*)] of the Lord is imminent [intensive perfect active indicative of ἐγγίζω (*engízō*)]. (EXT)

Hebrews 10:24 Let us repeatedly consider how to encourage fellow members of the local church from the source of the Royal Law and the Law of Freedom and from the source of the working objects of divine-good production,

v. 25 stop habitually forsaking the command to assemble ourselves together in the synagogue/church, as is the consistent behavior of certain reversionists, but encouraging them through your consistency; and even all the more as you see the day of the Rapture being imminent. (EXT)

4. Specific Details about the Rapture in:

1 Thessalonians 4:13 Now we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve like the rest who have no hope.

1. Ignorance of Bible doctrine is strategically the greatest failure of the Church-Age believer. This lack of knowledge is self-induced by lack of interest in serious study of the Bible.

² Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 224–25.



2. Consequently, the believers at Thessalonica were confused. They learned from Paul about imminency but wrongly concluded that those who died would not be included in the Rapture.
3. The phrase, “those who are asleep” is Paul’s way of describing how the bodies of those who had died lay in their graves as if asleep.
4. The souls and spirits of those who have died are alive and functioning in the Third Heaven in interim bodies (see 2 Corinthians 5:8, “We ... would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”)
5. Following physical death, unbelievers’ souls are retained in the Torments compartment of Hades until the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11–15).

1 Thessalonians 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also we believe that God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep as Christians.

v. 15 For we tell you this by the word of the Lord [ἐν λόγος κύριος (*en lógos kúrios*)³], that we who are alive and are left before the coming of the Lord, will surely not go ahead of those who have fallen asleep.

v. 16 For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel⁴ and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

6. In the angelic order of battle, two archangels are mentioned by name, Michael and Gabriel. They have command authority over the angels with the rank of Seraph with six wings as their designation of rank. Next, is the rank of Cherub with four wings as their designation of rank. All other angels have the rank of pursuivant and have no designation of rank, thus wingless.
7. Michael’s duties seem primarily to be associated with the nation of Israel while Gabriel is deployed with the angelic order of battle and the angelic college of heralds.
8. There are two sources of command for military activities in the ancient world, the voice command and the trumpet command. At the Rapture, it is the trumpet command that assembles the dead in Christ.

³ “The word of the Lord is a technical expression in Old Testament literature, often referring to a divine prophetic utterance. In the New Testament it occurs 15 times. As in the Old Testament, this phrase focuses on the prophetic nature and divine origin of what has been said” (The NET Bible [Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 1996–2005], 2311sn19).

⁴ Seraphim. The rank of some angelic beings. Each seraph is said to have six wings (Isaiah 6:2) including Michael and Gabriel, also classified in Scripture as “archangels.” The apocryphal Book of Enoch names Raphael and Uriel as seraphim. Cherubim have four wings. The only one named is Lucifer in Ezekiel 28:14.



1 Thessalonians 4:17

Then we who are alive, who are left, will be suddenly caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord. (NET)

9. The omnipotence of God raises the dead in Christ by replacing their former bodies of corruption with resurrection bodies of incorruption:

1 Corinthians 15:53

For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal puts on immortality.

v. 54

Now when this perishable puts on the imperishable, and this mortal puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will happen, “Death has been swallowed up in victory [Isaiah 25:8].”

v. 55

“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting [Hosea 13:14]?” (NET)

10. The level of spiritual growth one attains in life determines the categories of Nike Awards one will receive at the Evaluation Tribunal of Christ and referenced in the letter to Philadelphia in:

Revelation 3:11

“I am coming soon [a statement of the imminency of the Rapture]. Hold on [progressive present active imperative of κρατέω (*kratéō*): retain, recall, facilitate, and apply] to what you have [retroactive present active indicative of ἔχω (*échō*): escrow blessings] in order that [ἵνα (*hína*)] no one [μηδείς (*mēdeís*)] can take away [λαμβάνω (*lambánō*)] your crown [στέφανος (*stéphanos*)].

11. The verb, *échō*, describes the mature believer who has advanced to the environs of spiritual maturity. He did so by continuing his advance with consistent positive volition to the teaching of the Word of God. He knows a lot of doctrine from which inventory he makes consistent application.
12. The active voice indicates this believer has made the consistent advance in his knowledge of Scripture and with the indicative mood confirms this advance has resulted in spiritual maturity.
13. The conjunction, *ἵνα* (*hína*), introduces a purpose clause, “in order that,” followed by the subject *μηδείς* (*mēdeís*): “no one,” which refers to believers who are functioning in the cosmic systems, but have great influence because of several personal attributes.
14. These types function as emissaries for the Dark Side. They have betrayed their Savior, Jesus Christ, by their ignorance of truth which they have exchanged for popularity, influence, success, or social standing.



15. These individuals belittle those who are serious students of the Word of God, calling them Bible thumpers, religious fanatics, and Jesus freaks.
16. This situation advances us to the aorist active subjunctive of **λαμβάνω (lambánō)**: “to take away.” The culminative aorist is a warning to be alert to the machinations of believers who function in the cosmic systems.
17. The active voice indicates there are those associated with the believer in context who want to evangelize him into the cosmic systems with them.
18. However, this verb is a potential subjunctive which means the negative influence is real, but the mature believer rejects the temptation.
19. This may be described as people testing from those close to the advancing believer. He has the doctrine to stand fast, however, the test is real and must be rejected from within the evanescent bubble of the divine dynasphere.
20. Successful defence against the challenge prevents deviation into the cosmic system, retains his spiritual status quo, and complements his **στέφανος (stéphanos)**: “crown.” This aggrandizes this mature believer’s assignments in the millennial kingdom.
21. There are three specific crowns mentioned for the believer in the New Testament:

1. The **crown of life** is awarded to those who produce divine good from their spiritual gift, ambassadorship function, and royal priesthood all accomplished from an ever-advancing biblical inventory while resolving difficulties through the application of problem-solving devices.

James 1:12 Happy is the advanced believer who continues to endure testing for the purpose of approval, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised in eternity past for those who have personal love for Him. (EXT)

2. The **crown of righteousness** is given to advanced believers with emphasis on spiritual maturity. It is given for the development of virtue, honor, integrity, passing momentum tests, and fulfilment of the royal family honor code.

2 Timothy 4:7 I Have fought the honorable fight. I have completed my course. I have preserved doctrine in my soul.

v. 8 In eternity, a crown of righteousness is reserved for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award me on that day [**the Evaluation Tribunal**]. And not to me only, but also to all those who have loved His appearance [**Rapture**]. (EXT)

3. The **crown of glory** is awarded to pastors who faithfully study and communicate Bible doctrine to their congregations. The evaluation is strictly about the accuracy of his message, if what he teaches is clearly presented, doctrinally accurate, and exegetically supported.

This pastor's modus operandi is reflected by his emphasis on doctrine. He is prepared academically and theologically sound based on the literal analysis of Scripture which is reflected in his oral presentation to his assigned congregation.

1 Peter 5:2 Feed the flock of God among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion but willingly under God's direction, not for personal gain but from enthusiasm.

v. 3 And do not lord it over those entrusted to you, but be examples to the flock.

v. 4 Then when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that never fades away. (EXT)

Final Synopsis:

1. Believers are commanded to grow in grace and the knowledge of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:18)
2. The place where this spiritual growth is to take place is in a local church.
3. Believers are commanded to "stop habitually forsaking the command to assemble themselves together in the church." (Hebrews 10:25)
4. By comparison to eternity, the time we have on this earth to grow in grace is limited to just a few decades on average.
5. This earthly residence is the base of operations for the believer to grow in grace all the way to spiritual maturity.
6. It is by means of the regular assembly that others are encouraged and motivated to attend and join the others as effective witnesses for the Prosecution in Lucifer's case before the Divine Court of Appeals.
7. The esprit de corps that is gradually developed among those who consistently gather together is a source of encouragement for others to join the assembly.
8. The system by which the believer is enabled to make his spiritual advance begins with attendance at the local church where doctrine is being taught on a consistent basis.
9. The purpose for this consistent assembly is clearly stated in the two following passages:

