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# The Messenger



*"... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" Romans 10:15*

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## A Closer Look at the "AD 70 Theory" of Last Things

by Olan Hicks

Continuation

### HERMENEUTICS AND THE "IMMINENCY PASSAGES"

One of the primary reasons they think that seems to be what they call the "imminency passages." Evidently they see these as absolute statements that the time of the return of Christ and the end of the world was very close in terms of years when they were spoken and could not have been 2,000 years or more in the future. If the apostle Peter were here I think he would say to them, "But beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (II Peter 3:8). Ironically, Peter, in that third chapter, was discussing this very thing, the delay in the coming of the final day and the fact that some in later times would not understand it. He explains in the next verse (9) that the reason for the delay is not that God is slack concerning these promises, but that He is "longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." So He continues to wait. But they deny that the delay exists.

This points to another mistake in the AD 70 theory, the idea that the opportunity to get into the kingdom extends beyond the final day of judgment. Jesus indicated that the opportunity to repent is extended to mankind only until that day. When once He has risen up and shut the door, those who stand without and knock and plead for admission, will not get in (Luke 13:25). God knows that and so He continues to wait and keep the door open. But these brethren insist that the judgment day has occurred, but the door remains open and anyone can still come in. The truth is people who would respond to God must do so "while it is today." There will not be people in God's eternal city being baptized into Christ. That must be done before the city of God descends from heaven.

### WHAT ABOUT THE EXPRESSIONS "NEAR", "AT HAND", ETC.?

In most of these passages the translation is from the Greek word "mello." So called "preterists" make three mistakes in usage of this word. First, they assume that all passages where such words occur in reference to an "end," refer to the same event. Second, they make the mistake of thinking that God looks at time the same way we do, and third, they misdefine the word "mello." In addition they also ignore all of the "delay" passages in the scriptures, and there are several, and consider only the "imminency" passages.

The word "mello" is usually defined as "about to happen." But it is a mistake to think that it cannot refer to something that is a long way into the future. In fact, in Acts 22:16, this word is actually used to mean delay, as Ananias asks Saul, "Why are you waiting?" (from mello). Arise and be baptized. . ."

Here are some instances in the Bible in which it refers to long periods of time.

**Nearly 400 years:** In Matt. 11:14 this word is used to say of John the Baptist, "This is Elias which was for to come." (about to come). Malachi said this nearly 400 years earlier.

**1500 years:** In Acts 26:22-23 this word occurs twice in reference to things then happening “which Moses and the prophets did say should come.” (were about to come – mello). And again that Christ “should show light unto the people.” (was about to show light unto the people – mello). This prediction took 1500 years to fulfill.

**4,000 years:** In Romans 5:4 this word is used to say that Adam was “the figure of him that was to come.” (was about to come – mello). From Adam to Christ was at least 4,000 years.

Looking at these scriptural facts, how can one say that “about to come” cannot refer to something 2,000 years in the future? Obviously it is a mistake to think that every passage in which “mello” occurs necessarily refers to something immediately imminent in terms of earthly time.

Many scholars recognize that this word is not just a designation of something imminent, but is a designation of something that is certain. Thayer, for example, sees it as denoting “those things which will come to pass by fixed necessity or divine appointment.” (Lexicon, page 397).

### THE DELAY PASSAGES

Matthew 24 itself has statements indicating delay in reference to the event referred to after verse 34, which is not the same event as is discussed in the verses prior to 34. The first event was not delayed and had signs by which its approach could be recognized. The second event will come “in a time when you think not” (verses 44 & 50). No signs signaling its approach. But concerning the second event, when “heaven and earth shall pass away,” an example of a delay passage occurs at verse 48 where Jesus said that if a servant says, “My Lord delays his coming,” and begins to mistreat his fellow servants, he will be punished for it. How could he be convinced that a delay was occurring or convince anyone else of it unless there was some sort of delay in that coming?

Paul also speaks of this delay in reference to the “day of Christ,” in II Thess. 2:2-3, and told them not to be deceived into thinking that it was just at hand. He said “that day will not come except there come a falling away first” (verse 3).

Peter, as we have already mentioned, states that this delay exists and predicts that people will begin to scoff because of it (II Peter 3:3-4). He even explains why the delay is necessary. Ironically, he applies it to the very event we are discussing here and on which we differ, the passing away of the heavens and the earth. The destruction of Jerusalem was not delayed. Clearly the other event referred to in Matt. 24, the passing of the heavens and the earth, was delayed and still is being delayed.

At verse 7, Peter says that the present heavens and earth are “kept in store” by the same word that created them in the first place, “reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” In these verses he uses the same words as did Jesus in Matt. 24:35, “heavens” and “earth.” These are not words meaning an “age,” as in verse 3 and verse 14 of Matt. 24. These words mean the physical heavens and the physical earth, the grass, the rocks, the trees, the atmosphere, and even the sun, moon, and stars. In that third chapter Peter describes in graphic terms the destruction that is waiting for this world. Again here Preterists have to reject these explicit statements in favor of their theory.

At first exposure I did not see the AD 70 theory as anything having to do with fellowship or salvation. To me it seemed to be pretty much a harmless exercise in speculation about prophecies that men have speculated upon for centuries. But two factors are making it into much more than that. First, it ends up in a type of scripture denial that the Bible speaks of as spiritually fatal, denial of a coming resurrection. Second, it has in recent years developed an aggressiveness that was not there originally and this has made it a troublesome “issue,” capable of dividing churches. Paul wrote that to deny a coming resurrection is to reduce faith to vanity and leave people yet in their sins (I Cor. 15:12-17). He also said that when Hymenaeus and Philetus taught that the resurrection was past already, they overthrew the faith of some (II Tim. 2:17-18). These brethren are saying these two things, that no general resurrection is yet to come and that the resurrection has past already. So it is (1) destructive of vital elements of the faith and (2) in recent years has come to be divisive. So it is a consequential mistake.

*to be continued*

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**NOTES & NEWS:** Remember to check the prayer list for those with ongoing spiritual weaknesses and physical illnesses.

*“...Pray for one another...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” James 5:16*