

FR 77

“IT IS TIME”

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My father died in 1982. I still recall many things he said to me, especially those of a biblical nature.

As we discussed sin and its consequences, from time to time he would usually say, "Well, you know what the Bible says – it says that judgment must begin at the house of God, and if it begin at us, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?"

Of course, those of us who know a little of the Bible, know that is not exactly the way the verse reads. The part to which he had reference goes like this, "...judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God" [I Peter 4:17]? I grew up with that idea as a teenager, since I heard that from my youth. However, there is a major problem with that. Let me give you an example, then the application.

I grew up on the farm – truck farming (for those of you who do not know what that means, it is farming vegetables). In the dead of winter, the ground was frozen and nothing could be plowed, and we had no electricity, so the wood stove had to be fed. Wood must be cut, moved, and stacked into the woodshed. If that was all there was to it, the wood would never be cut and we would have been frozen. It was only when Daddy would say, "IT IS TIME that the wood must be cut, moved, and stacked into the woodshed," that something actually happened. Without the time element placed in the context of cutting the wood, we might have delayed till spring when it was a little warmer.

That is the same with I Peter 4:17, to which we have just referred. I will quote it again, but this time, please notice the time element that my Daddy always omitted.

"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God..." When Peter wrote this letter to the strangers who were scattered throughout five provinces, it was time for judgment to begin. Peter wrote this letter in AD 64. I did not notice that for a few years, even after I was preaching full time. Have you noticed it, or just passed it over, as I did?

The period between AD 30 and AD 70 was a transition period, in which God would remove His kingdom from the natural nation of Israel, and give it to the spiritual nation of Israel (the ekklesia of God).

The statement that **“it was time for judgment to begin”** was made to the First Century believers. It was uttered in AD 64. It was not made in 2001 and is not for us. It had reference to the judgment of God upon natural Israel for their rebellion, and for which

God was about to destroy their temple, their worship and the natural system that had governed them for about 1,500 years. Refer back to the last issue and study Matthew 24.

"**It is time...**" is not the only time statement in the "new testament." It is filled with them. We will note only a few of them in this issue.

(1) "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light" [Rom. 13:11,12].

(2) "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" [Rom. 16:20].

(3) "So that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" [I Cor. 1:7].

(4) "But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none."... "And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away" (lit. "is passing away") [I Cor. 7:29,31].

(5) "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our (First Century believers) admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" [I Cor. 10:11].

(6) "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand" [Phil. 4:5].

(7) "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." ... "For yet a little while (lit. "soon, very soon") and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry" [Heb. 10:25,37].

(8) "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient, establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door" [James 5:7-9].

(9) "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" [I Pet. 1:5].

(10) "Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead." ... "but the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." ... "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God" [I Pet. 4:5,7,17]?

(11) "And the world passeth away (Greek – "is passing away"), and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. Little children, it is the last time (Greek – "last hour"): and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time (Greek – "last hour") [I John 2:17,18].

These verses should give one the understanding that the writers of the "new testament" were expecting these things to happen in their lifetimes. There was an imminency factor always involved in their writings.

If we try to extract these time-saturated passages from their First Century setting, and stretch them into our future, we have butchered the meaning of the words. And, with such twisting, we can make any passage mean anything we want it to mean. It is by this method that some teach that the kingdom is yet in our future, saying "at hand" means thousands of years in the future.

Do we need to re-study and re-shape our eschatological views with these clear and forceful references?

The term "at hand" is always used in the Scriptures to convey to man the understanding of near and imminent.

Allow Jesus in His own words to explain what "at hand" means. When John and Jesus preached, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" [Mat. 3:2], what did they mean? Jesus said, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" [Mark 1:15]. The expression, "the time is fulfilled" does not mean that whatever is in the context will be fulfilled two or three thousand years in the future (maybe longer). NEVER!

Who wrote of the nearness of these events? Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, James, and the writer of Hebrews. And they all agree. Why do we not agree with them?

Be careful about changing God's words. We must not overlook, avoid or water-down these time passages. Just accept them, and let God tell us what He means. They are clear enough, if we can get past our tradition and prejudice. We can understand them.

You may read of these imminent time factors in more detail in my book "THE LAST DAYS." \$12.00 postpaid.. Order from: Ron McRay, P.O.Box 1425, Hawkins, TX 75765. To receive "Eschatology Review, a free monthly printed newsletter, send your name and mailing address.

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