Fulfilled Prophecies

The Judge Was Already Standing At The Door



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† When James wrote that the Judge was standing right at the door, he wasn't warning Christians about an event thousands of years in their future. He was addressing believers living in the first century, telling them that the coming of the Lord was near and that judgment was approaching their generation (James 5:7-9).

† Jesus had already warned that Jerusalem and its temple would face destruction within the generation that heard Him

speak. James, Peter, and John repeated that same message of approaching judgment (Matthew 24:34; 1 Peter 4:7; Revelation 1:3).
† The question isn't whether Christ would come in judgment. The question is when Scripture said that judgment would happen. Jesus said it would happen within His generation, and the apostles confirmed that the appointed time was drawing near (Matthew 23:36; James 5:8).
† When we compare James 5 with Matthew 24, Luke 21, and Revelation, we discover one consistent message. The Judge was already standing at the door, and the judgment of Old Covenant Jerusalem was approaching (James 5:9; Luke 21:20-22).

James Announced The Nearness Of Christ's Coming
James 5:7-9
Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.
You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.
Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.
† James wasn't speaking to Christians living thousands of years later. He was addressing believers who were experiencing suffering and needed patience because the coming of the Lord was near (James 5:1-8).
† Notice the urgency of his language. The coming was near, and the Judge was already standing right at the door. These weren't descriptions of an event separated from his readers by thousands of years (Matthew 24:33-34).
† James compared their waiting to a farmer expecting a harvest. The harvest represented the approaching completion of the age, when judgment would separate those who belonged to Christ from those who rejected Him (Matthew 13:39-43).
† The believers were instructed to strengthen their hearts

because their suffering wouldn't continue indefinitely. Christ's promised vindication was approaching within their own generation (Luke 21:28; Hebrews 10:36-37).

Jesus Had Already Said He Was Near The Door
Matthew 24:32-34
Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near;
so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door.
Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.
† Jesus used the same picture that James later used. Jesus said He would be right at the door when the signs appeared, and James declared that the Judge was already standing there (James 5:9).
† Jesus identified the generation that would witness these events. He didn't say a generation thousands of years later. He said this generation, referring to the people living when He spoke (Matthew 23:36; Matthew 24:34).
† The fig tree illustration wasn't a prophecy about the modern nation of Israel. Jesus was teaching His disciples to recognize the approaching judgment when they saw the signs He had described (Matthew 24:32-33).
† James confirmed that the anticipated coming had drawn near. His words fit the same first-century setting Jesus established in the Olivet Discourse (James 5:8-9; Matthew 24:34).

The Judgment Was Directed Toward Jerusalem
Matthew 23:35-38
so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.
Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.
Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!
† Jesus identified Jerusalem as the city responsible for rejecting God's messengers and shedding the blood of the righteous. He declared that the accumulated judgment would fall upon that generation (Luke 11:49-51).
† The judgment wasn't directed toward the entire physical planet. It concerned the covenant nation that had rejected its Messiah and persecuted His followers (Matthew 21:43; Matthew 23:37-38).
† Jesus announced that their house would be left desolate. The temple represented the center of Old Covenant worship, and its destruction would demonstrate that the former covenant order had reached its appointed end (Matthew 24:1-2; Hebrews 8:13).
† James was writing during the period when that judgment was approaching. The Judge standing at the door was consistent with Jesus' warning that Jerusalem's desolation would come upon His generation (James 5:9; Matthew 23:36).

Jesus Identified The Sign Of Jerusalem's Desolation
Luke 21:20-22
But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.
Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city;
because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.
† Jesus gave His disciples a recognizable sign. Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies, and those living in Judea were instructed to flee (Matthew 24:15-16).
† These instructions were geographical and historical. They concerned Jerusalem, Judea, and the approaching destruction of the city (Luke 21:20-24).

† Jesus called these the days of vengeance, when the things written concerning that judgment would be fulfilled. He wasn't describing the destruction of the physical universe (Luke 21:22; Matthew 24:34).
† The Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 provides the historical fulfillment of this warning. The city and temple were destroyed, bringing the Old Covenant temple system to its decisive end (Matthew 24:1-2; Hebrews 8:13).
† That's why James could say the Judge was standing at the door. The generation Jesus had warned was approaching its appointed judgment (James 5:9; Luke 21:32).

The Coming Of The Son Of Man Was Within That Generation
Matthew 24:29-30
But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.
And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.
† Jesus described His coming with the prophetic language of heavenly signs and clouds. The Old Testament used similar language to describe God's judgment against nations (Isaiah 13:9-13; Isaiah 19:1).
† The coming on the clouds represented Christ's divine authority and judgment. It didn't require Jesus to physically descend and stand upon the earth (Daniel 7:13-14).
† The shaking of the heavens described the removal of an established order. In this context, it concerned the judgment of Jerusalem and the passing of the Old Covenant system (Hebrews 12:26-28).
† Jesus placed these events within the same generation that would witness Jerusalem's destruction. We can't separate His coming from the time statement He gave His disciples (Matthew

24:34).
† James wasn't announcing another coming beyond the one Jesus had promised. He was encouraging believers to remain faithful as that appointed judgment approached (James 5:7-9).

Peter Confirmed That Judgment Was Near
1 Peter 4:7
The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.
† Peter didn't say the end was thousands of years away. He said it was near, addressing believers who were already experiencing trials and persecution (1 Peter 4:12-13).
† The end concerned the approaching completion of the Old Covenant age, not the destruction of the physical earth (Matthew 24:3, 34; Hebrews 8:13).
† Peter's statement agrees with James. Both apostles taught that the decisive events associated with Christ's coming were approaching their generation (James 5:8-9).

1 Peter 4:17
For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?
† Peter said it was time for judgment to begin. He didn't place that judgment in a distant generation (1 Peter 4:7).
† The first-century believers were being tested through suffering, while those who rejected the gospel faced the approaching consequences of their unbelief (1 Peter 4:12-19).
† Peter's warning agrees with Jesus' announcement that Jerusalem would be held accountable for rejecting God's messengers and His Son (Matthew 23:34-36).
† James and Peter weren't contradicting Jesus. They were confirming that His promised judgment was drawing near (James 5:9; Matthew 24:34).

Hebrews Said The Coming Would Not Be Delayed
Hebrews 10:36-37

For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.
FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY.
† The writer of Hebrews encouraged suffering believers to endure because the promised coming was approaching. The expression a very little while communicated urgency to the original readers (Hebrews 10:32-39).
† The writer wasn't promising an event thousands of years beyond their lifetime. The passage connects their present endurance with the approaching fulfillment of God's promise (Hebrews 10:36-39).
† Hebrews also explained that the Old Covenant was becoming obsolete and ready to disappear. The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple marked the historical removal of that covenant system (Hebrews 8:13; Matthew 24:1-2).
† James said the Judge was at the door, and Hebrews said the One who was coming wouldn't delay. Both statements belong to the same period of covenant transition (James 5:9; Hebrews 10:37).

Revelation Announced The Same Approaching Judgment
Revelation 1:1-3
The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John,
who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.
Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.
† Revelation begins by identifying the timing of its prophecy. The things revealed to John must soon take place, and the time was near (Revelation 1:1-3).
† These words were addressed to first-century believers who were expected to read, understand, and obey the message

(Revelation 1:4, 11).
† The timing agrees with James, Peter, and Hebrews. All announced that the promised judgment and vindication were approaching (James 5:8-9; 1 Peter 4:7; Hebrews 10:37).
† Revelation's language of nearness shouldn't be stretched across thousands of years. The book identifies its own historical urgency from its opening verses (Revelation 1:1-3).

Revelation Identified The Generation Connected With Christ's Coming
Revelation 1:7
BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.
† John used the same prophetic imagery Jesus used in the Olivet Discourse. Both passages describe the Son of Man coming with clouds and the mourning associated with His judgment (Matthew 24:30).
† Revelation specifically identifies those who pierced Christ. This connects the prophecy with the generation responsible for His crucifixion (Matthew 27:22-26; Acts 2:22-23).
† Jesus had already declared that the judgment connected with His rejection would come upon that generation (Matthew 23:35-36).
† The cloud-coming language describes Christ's authority and judgment, consistent with the prophetic imagery of Daniel and the Old Testament prophets (Daniel 7:13-14; Isaiah 19:1).
† James announced that the Judge was standing at the door because the time for that covenant judgment was approaching (James 5:9).

Revelation Identified The City Under Judgment
Revelation 11:8
And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.
† John identified the great city by describing it as the place

where the Lord was crucified. That identifies Jerusalem (Luke 23:33; John 19:17-20).
† The names Sodom and Egypt were symbolic descriptions of the city's spiritual corruption and covenant unfaithfulness (Isaiah 1:9-10; Ezekiel 16:46-49).
† This identification connects Revelation's judgment imagery with Jesus' warnings against Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37-38; Luke 21:20-22).
† The city that rejected Christ and persecuted His messengers faced the judgment Jesus had promised within that generation (Matthew 23:34-36).

Revelation Ended With The Same Time Statements
Revelation 22:6-7
And he said to me, These words are faithful and true; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must soon take place.
And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.
† Revelation ends with the same urgency found at its beginning. The events must soon take place, and Christ announced that He was coming quickly (Revelation 1:1-3).
† The first-century churches were being encouraged to remain faithful because their promised vindication was approaching (Revelation 2:10; Revelation 3:11).
† John's words agree with James. The Judge was near, and His coming wasn't being postponed for thousands of years (James 5:8-9).

Revelation 22:10-12
And he *said to me, Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.
Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.
Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to

render to every man according to what he has done.
† John was instructed not to seal the prophecy because its fulfillment was near. This contrasts with Daniel, who was told to seal his prophecy because its fulfillment concerned a later time (Daniel 12:4, 9).
† Revelation's original audience wasn't told to wait thousands of years. They were told that Christ was coming quickly and that His reward was with Him (Revelation 22:12).
† The promised judgment included the vindication of the faithful and the removal of the covenant order that had persecuted them (Revelation 6:9-11; Revelation 18:20, 24).
† James, Jesus, Peter, Hebrews, and Revelation all point toward the same approaching first-century judgment (James 5:9; Matthew 24:34; 1 Peter 4:17).

Historical References
† Flavius Josephus, a first-century Jewish historian, recorded the Roman siege and destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 in The Jewish War, Books 5-6. His account describes the famine, violence, burning of the temple, and devastation of the city.
† Josephus described the terrible suffering experienced during the siege, providing historical confirmation of the destruction Jesus had warned would come upon Jerusalem (Luke 21:20-24).
† Tacitus, the Roman historian, also described the Jewish revolt and Jerusalem's siege in Histories, Book 5. His account independently confirms the historical setting of the Roman campaign.
† Eusebius, writing in the fourth century, reported that Christians in Jerusalem had been instructed to leave the city and settle in Pella before the war. His account appears in Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapter 5.
† These historical writers document the destruction of Jerusalem and preserve traditions concerning the early Christians. They don't independently establish every prophetic interpretation, but their accounts agree with the historical setting described in Jesus' warning (Matthew 24:15-16; Luke 21:20-

22).
† The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 wasn't the end of the physical world. It was the historical judgment that marked the decisive end of the Old Covenant temple order (Hebrews 8:13; Matthew 24:1-2).

How It Applies To Us Today
† We don't need to wait for the Judge to approach the door again. The judgment Jesus announced against Jerusalem belonged to the generation He addressed, and that judgment was fulfilled in AD 70 (Matthew 24:34; Luke 21:32).
† Christ's kingdom isn't waiting to begin. Jesus received His kingdom, and believers now belong to the kingdom that cannot be shaken (Daniel 7:13-14; Hebrews 12:28).
† We aren't living under the Old Covenant system of temple sacrifices and Levitical priesthood. Christ fulfilled that covenant and established the better covenant through His sacrifice (Hebrews 8:6-13; Hebrews 10:11-18).
† We don't need to interpret every modern war, earthquake, or political event as a sign that Matthew 24 is about to happen. Jesus identified the generation that would witness those events (Matthew 24:34).
† We can live with confidence because Christ reigns now. His kingdom isn't dependent upon another earthly temple or a future national restoration of Old Covenant Israel (Luke 17:20-21; Hebrews 12:22-28).
† The patience James encouraged remains an important lesson for believers today. We should remain faithful, treat one another with love, and trust God's promises, even during difficult circumstances (James 5:7-11).
† The fulfillment of prophecy strengthens our faith because Jesus kept His word. What He promised His generation came to pass, and His kingdom continues forever (Matthew 24:34-35; Luke 1:32-33).

Q & A Appendix
Q: Who was the Judge standing at the door?

A: Jesus Christ, whose coming in judgment had been promised to His first-century disciples (James 5:7-9; Matthew 24:33-34).

Q: What did James mean when he said the coming of the Lord was near?
A: He was announcing that Christ's promised judgment and the vindication of His suffering followers were approaching within their generation (James 5:7-9; Hebrews 10:36-37).

Q: Was James describing a future destruction of the physical earth?
A: No. His warning fits the first-century judgment Jesus announced against Jerusalem and the Old Covenant order (Matthew 23:36-38; Luke 21:20-22).

Q: How do we know Matthew 24 concerned the first century?
A: Jesus explicitly declared that His generation wouldn't pass away until all those things took place (Matthew 24:34; Luke 21:32).

Q: Did Jesus physically return to stand upon the earth in AD 70?
A: Scripture doesn't say He physically stood upon the earth during that coming. The language describes His coming in divine authority and judgment, using the prophetic imagery of clouds (Daniel 7:13-14; Matthew 24:30).

Q: Why did Peter say judgment was already beginning?
A: Peter was addressing believers experiencing trials during the approaching end of the Old Covenant age (1 Peter 4:7, 12-17).

Q: Does Revelation describe the same approaching judgment?
A: Yes. From its opening to its conclusion, Revelation declares that its events must soon take place and that Christ was coming quickly (Revelation 1:1-3; Revelation 22:6-12).

Q: What happened in AD 70?
A: Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem and its temple, fulfilling Jesus' warning concerning the city's desolation and bringing the Old Covenant temple system to its historical end (Matthew 24:1-2; Luke 21:20-24).

Q: Are Christians still waiting for another fulfillment of these judgment prophecies?
A: No. From the fulfilled perspective, these prophecies reached their appointed fulfillment in the first century. Christ reigns now in His everlasting kingdom (Matthew 24:34; Hebrews 12:28).

Q: What does the Judge standing at the door teach us today?
A: It teaches us to trust the timing of Scripture, recognize Christ's faithfulness, and live confidently in His established kingdom (James 5:8-11; Hebrews 12:28).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †
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Source Index
† James 5:7-9; Matthew 24:32-34; Matthew 23:35-38; Luke 21:20-22; Matthew 24:29-30; 1 Peter 4:7; 1 Peter 4:17; Hebrews 10:36-37; Revelation 1:1-3; Revelation 1:7; Revelation 11:8; Revelation 22:6-7; Revelation 22:10-12.
† Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War, Books 5-6; Tacitus, Histories, Book 5; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapter 5.

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