

NEARER NOW

The signs are right, aren't they? This is the time for Jesus to return—isn't it?



by Roger C. Palms

End-times books sell so well that both secular and religious publishers scramble to get the pop-fiction out there in print for readers who want to find out more about the last days and the return of Jesus. There is money to be made from the anticipated coming of the Lord. “We’d better cash in while we can,” say those who want to ride the crest of the wave. But even their reasons or motives still declare a truth—our salvation is *nearer now*.

Is Jesus coming back soon? Is our salvation at hand? So many people, looking at terrorism and war, famine and earthquakes, want to know. Is this the time; is today the day? There is one certainty: The apostle Paul, burdened about the

way believers were living, said, “...our salvation is *nearer now* than when we first believed” (Romans 13:11). It could be today, or it could be before morning; we live in anticipation—our salvation is *nearer now*.

Those So-called Certain Signs

Some years ago a man became so convinced that the time was near for the return of Jesus that he sold his house, along with all his belongings, and waited. What was the point? Why bother? He could just as well have been ready inside his house as outdoors looking up. And was he standing there with his hands full of the money he got from selling everything?

Europe was so frightened when Napoleon and his armies were on

the loose that people said, “Surely the Lord will come now.” Then it was Hitler and his cronies, so wicked, so many dying at their hands—surely this is the time, people thought. Communism, a movement that enslaved millions, became a certain sign. Surely Jesus would come. Those who put their whole being into the certainty of a particular time only to be found wrong are forgotten now.

Even so, some still try to set dates. History has seen many such persons who did that, capturing the interest and sometimes the hysteria of others for a little while but now left abandoned along the roadside of time.

When people who get caught up in “end-times” thinking start to wonder, “When will Christ re-

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turn?” we can tell them, “*Nearer now* than when we first believed.” When some who are watching for signs to read tell us, “Here’s proof; surely these are the last days,” we can say, “Yes, the last days, but not because of your ‘proof.’” With quotations from Scripture we will hear, “Look at the wars, the rumors of wars and all the other things Jesus said would happen.” Then we can reply that Jesus told us, “these are the beginning” (See Matthew 24). We may know the beginning, but that doesn’t mean we know the end. “Be on guard! Be alert!” Jesus said. “You do not know when that time will come” (Mark 13:33).

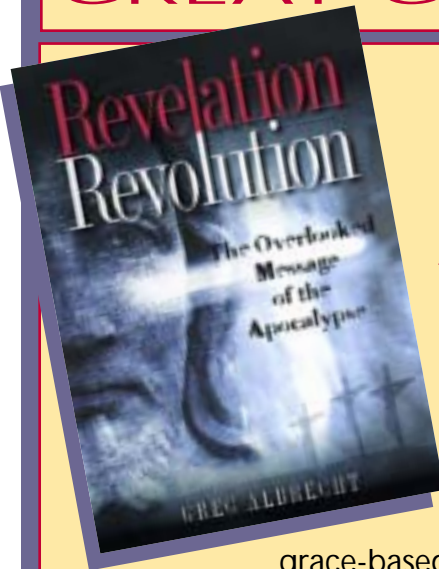
Strong and Steady

The apostle Paul spoke of the last days in a different way when writing to the Corinthian church, that church which seemed to be confused about so many things. He encouraged believers to anticipate the return of Jesus and to hold steady, saying, “He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:8).

The time is *nearer now*. Will I be strong? Will I be steady? The time is getting closer. That’s what we are told. Be ready, be anticipating, be strong—right to the end.

When will completion come; when will Jesus come back? Nobody knows the time. But we can announce to anyone who asks questions about the future, “Our salvation is *nearer now*.” That’s the one clear certainty. We can build our lives on that. And we can help people take hold of God’s offered strength that each of us will need until that day. □

Roger C. Palms (M.A.; M.Div.; D.D) is former Editor of Decision magazine. He is the author of fifteen books and hundreds of magazine and newspaper articles. He teaches at writers’ conferences, in colleges and in theological seminaries in the U.S. and other countries. He serves as an editor and mentor with several Christian organizations. Roger and his wife, Andrea, have two children and two grandchildren.



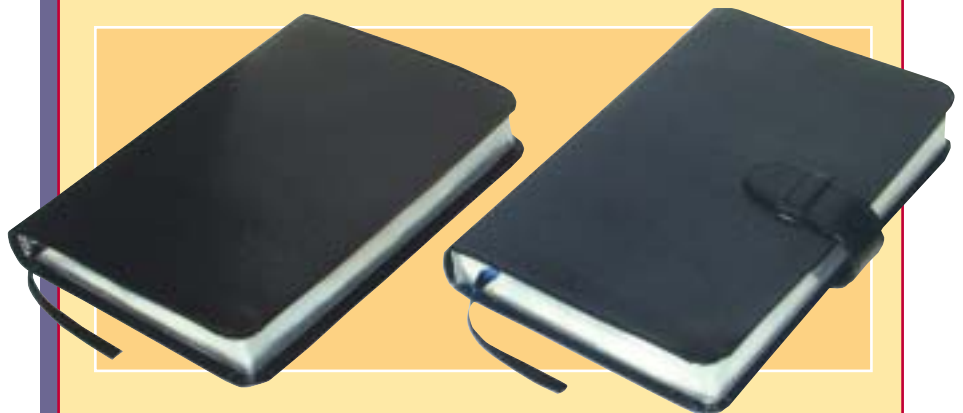
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