

Well the commentaries will tell you that when it says the day of Christ is at hand, that word at hand actually should be translated, "is already here." The word is used in many secular Greek texts and elsewhere in the Bible to mean right here right now. But some of ~~XXX~~ the commentaries will say, Yes but it can't mean that in this case. In this case (they say) it must mean just at hand, not merely at hand but just at hand but not here already. But the word in all other uses means it is already here. Most of them just don't face the problem. If you do face the problem I think you find yourself driven to the conclusion that there are two aspects.

There is an aspect of the coming of Christ of which we are given definite signs. There are things that have to happen -- the man of sin has to be revealed, there has to be a temple where he can sit, and be worshipped. There has to be definite things that one can recognize if he studies the Bible if he's a Christian, if he's looking for it he will recognize it. These signs are here, the Lord must be going to come to this earth to set up His kingdom very soon. But then in other cases, in fact in most cases, he says, We look for it and long for it, but we don't know when it's going to come. We only know that in such an hour as we think not it comes. The only way you can reconcile it is to say that there are two distinct phases, otherwise you find Paul utterly contradicting itself. You have the Scripture contradicting itself in a way that is unthinkable, unless you recognize ~~XXX~~ that there are two distinct phases to the coming again of Christ.

I saw a leaflet some time ago: Are There Two Comings of Christ or One? Everything has ~~gon~~ got to happen at once because there's only one second coming! How absurd that is. How many first comings were there? When did Christ come at His first coming? Was it when the angel announced to Mary that He was coming? Was it when he was conceived? when he was born? when He began His ministry? Was it when he was raised from the dead? When was the first coming of Christ. Why He came back to earth a dozen times during that ~~3~~ 40 days after He was raised from the dead. But we don't say, There's been a dozen comings already, we don't look for the 13th coming! All those are different phases of the first coming of Christ, and 2000 yrs. have intervened, and who can say how many phases there may be to the 2nd coming. But there is a phase to the second coming of which Paul speaks in 2 Thess., a phase in which there will be signs in advance which the world will not recognize because the world pays no attention to the Bible and is not interested in the things of Christ, but anyone who reads the Bible and studies events should be able to recognize these signs.

But there is another phase of the coming of Christ which is a phase that Christians look forward to with joy and happiness, a phase for which ~~n~~ there is no premonitory sign that can be recognized. There are many signs that it is getting nearer and there have been all through the ages. Jesus said, You see wars and rumours of wars; you see pestilence, you see perils, all this. Rejoice, lift up your heads for the coming of Christ is nearer! I'm sure they said in the days of Nero this is good, wonderful, the coming of Christ is nearer. And we should All these things that happen, mean it is nearer. But how near is it, God has kept (the secret) in His own power. It might be tonight; it might be tomorrow; it might be next week; it might be 100 yrs. from now. We don't know when it will be, but we are to hope to the end.