

Handout #1 Lesson 9

Eschatology / eschatological: From the Greek *eschatos* meaning “last”; pronunciation = es’-kuh-tol’-uh-jee. Beliefs or teachings about the “last things”. In the Biblical context, the term “eschatology” refers to teachings either about events expected to take place during the last days of the present age or about occurrences anticipated at the beginning of, or during the age to come. The term is used by Biblical scholars as:

- a synonym for “the Kingdom of God”
- to refer to “eschatological” phenomena or events that are expected to mark the last days of the present age and events that are anticipated in connection with the transition between a present age and the age to come
- events that are aspects of the life of the resurrected dead—those who are condemned to the lake of fire and those blessed who enter the future Kingdom of God

James lived at the transition period between the end of one age and the beginning of the Final Age of man. This transition period was a 40 year period between the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and the destruction of the Temple in 70AD which was the definitive “closing” of the Age of the Sinai Covenant and the opening of the Final Age of man [see Hebrews 9:8-9].

Parousia: A Greek word meaning “coming”, “arrival”, or “being present.”

Pronunciation = puh-roo’zhee-uh. In the Greco-Roman world this word announced the official visit of a king, or his official representative, to one of his vassal states or cities bound to him through a covenant treaty, in order to judge the loyalty of those bound to him in covenant and to dispense justice. Christians applied this term to future events associated with “coming” or “presence” of the Lord Jesus Christ, however, the Parousia is not limited to Christ’s final coming; it can also refer to the power He will display when He comes to deliver judgment and to establish His Kingdom of heaven on earth—the Church. The events of Christ’s Parousia could include:

- The power Christ will display when He establishes His Messianic Kingdom, the Church
- Christ the King coming to deliver justice to His servants
- The resurrection of the dead
- The return of the resurrected Saints with the Glorified Christ
- The transformation of the faithful living at the time of His Second Advent
- Christ the King coming in judgment
- The presence of Christ in the miracle of the Eucharist

For references to the “parousia” of the Lord see Matthew 24:3, 7, 37, 39; 1Corinthians 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 8; James 5:7-8; 2 Peter 1:16; 3:4, 12; 1 John 2:28.

In this final section of his discourse on right Christian living, James addresses the necessity for:

- Patient endurance, 5:7-11
- Avoiding casual oath swearing, 5:12
- Prayers, 5:13-18
- Conversion, 5:19-20

Handout #2 Lesson 9

In the conclusion of his letter/discourse, James will address his audience with the intimate language of kinship, *adelphoi* = “brothers and sisters”, four times in the final 14 verses:

1. “brothers (and sisters)” 5:7
2. “my brothers (and sisters) 5:10
3. “my brothers (and sisters) 5:12
4. “brothers (and sisters)” 5:19

James 5:12

Please notice that this is James’ sixth reference to Leviticus chapter 19 and his 30th reference to Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus’ command to make your ‘Yes’ mean yes and your ‘No’ mean no in Matthew 5:33-37 is understood to apply to one’s:

1. Truthfulness as opposed to lying: This includes perjury and giving false evidence [see Exodus 20:16; Deuteronomy 5:20]; as well as the use of God’s name in performing some occult act.
2. Sincerity as opposed to hypocrisy: The words from your lips must correspond to the sincerity in your heart.
3. Strength of character as opposed to a vacillating will: An oath is not necessary if you can be trusted to do what you say you will or won’t do.

James’ adaptation of Jesus’ teaching on oath swearing in James 5:12 renews the theme he introduced in 1:19 and developed throughout his letter in his discussion of proper and improper speech. James’ statement in 5:12 is so remarkably similar to Jesus’ statement in Matthew 5:33-37 that it seems likely James is paraphrasing Jesus’ teaching: [using the Interlinear Greek-English translation]

Matthew 5:33-37	James 5:12
5:33: <i>again you heard it said</i>	<i>Above all (before all), my brothers (and sisters)</i>
5:34: <i>but I say to you, do not swear at all</i>	<i>do not swear</i>
5:34b: <i>neither by the Heaven, because it is God’s throne;</i>	<i>neither by the Heaven</i>
5:35: <i>neither by the earth because it is the footstool of His feet</i>	<i>neither by the earth</i>
5:35b: <i>neither to Jerusalem because it is the city of the great King.</i>	
5:36: <i>neither swear by your head, because you are not able to make one hair white or black.</i>	<i>nor any other oath.</i>
5:37: <i>but let your word be Yes, yes; No, no</i>	<i>But let out of you be Yes, yes</i>
5:37: <i>No, no</i>	<i>and the No, no,</i>
5:37b: <i>for whatever is more than these is evil.</i>	<i>that you may not fall under judgment.</i>

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Handout #3 Lesson 9

In Matthew chapters 24-25 the coming judgment is fused with the final judgment [see 25:31-46]; although Jesus made the distinction between these two judgments clear [see Matthew 16:28 and 24:1]. Separated in time these two “Parousia” of the Lord are inseparable in the sense that the first judgment of the Old Covenant Jews who refused to accept the Messiah will prefigure the Second Coming of the Messiah at the end of time to judge all men. The Matthew 24 prophecies were all historically fulfilled in the rebellion against the Roman Empire which began in 66AD and the destruction of the Temple, the death of over a million Jews, and the enslavement of the remained of the population in the Roman army’s destruction of Judea from 67-70AD, in a period of 3 ½ years.

Prophecy from Matthew chapter 24	Historical Fulfillment
The Jerusalem Temple will be completely destroyed	The Jerusalem Temple was utterly destroyed by the Roman army in 70AD; never to be rebuilt.
Many will come claiming to be the Christ	In the revolt against Rome that began in 66AD, three different men claimed to be the Messiah
There will be wars	In 64AD the Roman Empire became unstable. A number of Roman provinces began revolts against the Empire
There will be famines	Acts 11:27-28 refers to a world-wide famine at the time of the Emperor Claudius. Aid was sent to Jerusalem by Christians in the Roman Empire
There will be earthquakes	There were earthquakes at the Crucifixion and Resurrection. Earthquakes are frequent in the Holy Land due to a fault line that runs through the Jordan River Valley.
Christians will be handed over and tortured and killed	St. Stephen was martyred c. 34AD, St. James Zebedee in c. 42, and St. James Bishop of Jerusalem in c. 62. In 64AD the Roman Empire authorized persecution of Christians. Many Christians across the Empire were martyred including Sts. Peter and Paul.
Many will fall away from the faith because of the perilous times	The Jews who refused to believe in the Messiah in effect “fell away” from the faith and so did many Christians who faced torture and martyrdom
False prophets will arise	Many false prophets urged the revolt against Rome in 66AD
Lawlessness will increase	Prior to the revolt the Roman authority brutally massacred men, women and children (3,600 in Jerusalem in one day); Jewish gangs known as the Sicarii murdered people at will
The Gospel will be proclaimed to the inhabited world [<i>oikoumene</i>], meaning the Roman world, before the “end” will come.	By the time of the Revolt in 66AD the Gospel had spread from Britain to the Black Sea, from Gaul to Galatia, and from Egypt to the banks of the Euphrates River—covering the boundaries of the Roman Empire and beyond into India where St. Thomas was martyred.
The Temple will be profaned	The Emperor Nero planned to put his statue in the Holy of Holies of the Temple but died before the plan could be initiated. Roman General Titus set up Roman standards, which depicted Roman deities, in the Temple ruins in 70AD
Those in Judea must recognize the signs and escape.	Simon, the Christian Bishop of Jerusalem led the Christian community out of Judea, across the Jordan River into Perea c. 66AD

THE HISTORICAL FULFILLMENT OF MATTHEW CHAPTER 24

Prophecy from Matthew 24	Fulfillment historically
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There will be wars	In 64AD the Roman Empire became unstable. A number of Roman provinces began revolts against the Empire
There will be famines	Acts 11:27-28 refers to a world-wide famine at the time of the Emperor Claudius. Aid was sent to Jerusalem by Christians in the Roman Empire
There will be earthquakes *	There was a massive earthquake when Jesus died on the cross and at His Resurrection. Earthquakes are frequent in the Holy Land due to a fault line that runs through the Jordan River Valley.
Christians will be handed over and tortured and killed	Stephen was martyred c. 34AD and St. James in c. 62. In 64AD the Roman Empire authorized persecution of Christians. Many Christians across the Empire were martyred including Sts. Peter and Paul.
Many will fall away from the faith because of the perilous times	The Jews who refused to believe in the Messiah in effect “fell away” from the faith and so did many Christians who faced martyrdom
False prophets will arise	Many false prophets urged the revolt against Rome in 66AD
Lawlessness will increase	Prior to the revolt the Roman authority acted with brutal disregard for the safety of the people; Jewish gangs known as the Scaraii murdered people at will
The Gospel will be proclaimed to the inhabited world [<i>oikoumene</i>]; meaning the Roman world before the “end” will come.	By the time of the Revolt in 66AD the Gospel had spread from Britain to the Black Sea, from Gaul to Galatia, and from Egypt to the banks of the Euphrates River—covering the boundaries of the Roman Empire and beyond into India where St. Thomas was martyred.
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In the Old Testament account of the Sinai experience earthquakes are associated with covenant-making and in Jesus' apocalyptic messages in the Synoptic Gospels and in the Book of Revelation earthquakes are one of the phenomena associated with the coming Day of Judgment. In the Book of Revelation it is not a coincidence that St. John mentions earthquakes 7 times in 6:12; 8:5; 11:13 (twice); 11:19; 16:18 (twice). In the Book of Revelation earthquakes are one of the signs of God's divine interactions with man in both covenant-making and in rendering divine judgment. The seven times repetition of the mention of earthquakes in Revelation emphasizes the covenantal dimensions of the sign—the number 7 figures predominately in salvation history in association with covenant formation [see i.e. Genesis 1:1-31 where the Holy Spirit, the divine wind [*ruah*] pronounces creation “good” in the formation of the first covenant with man and man's day of communion with God is established on the 7th day; in the covenant with Noah in Genesis 7:4, 10; 8:10, 12, 14; and in the covenant formation at Sinai in Exodus 24:16]. 7 is also the number of spiritual perfection; it is the number of the Holy Spirit [Isaiah 11:1 = 7 gifts; Revelation 1:4; 4:5]. So what is the significance of Jesus' prophecy of earthquakes? Jesus of Nazareth, the promised Davidic Messiah came to bring the definitive “earth shaking” covenant forming, promised final judgment event.

The inspired writer of Revelation understood this “earth shaking” event in this context when he wrote: *Make sure that you never refuse to listen when he speaks. If the people who on earth refused to listen to a warning could not escape their punishment, how shall we possibly escape if we turn away from a voice that warns us from heaven? That time his voice made the earth shake, but now he has given us this promise: I am going to shake the earth once more and not only the earth but heaven as well. The words once more indicate the removal of what is shaken, since these are created things, so that what is not shaken remains. We have been given possession of an unshakable kingdom. Let us therefore be grateful and use our gratitude to worship God in the way that pleases him, in reverence and fear. For our God is a consuming fire.* Hebrews 12:25-29

Jesus Christ came to establish the cosmic earthquake of the New Covenant which would transform not only man's role in salvation history but the entire cosmos in the eschatological event of the promised creation of the new heavens and the new earth [2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-2]. The rebirth of the human family in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, the re-born Israel which is the New Covenant Church, is the first stage in that new creation, just as the King of Kings declared in victory: *Behold, I make all things new*” Revelation 21:5.