## Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin Fredericksburg, Texas 78624 830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

## <u>B1205 – January 29, 2012</u> Introduction To Eschatology

Alright, we are entering the last event in the Framework, the destiny of the Church. All this has to do with the word eschatology; so let's get a little vocabulary down. Eschatology is the word that we're studying. *Eschatos* is the Greek word that means "last," *-ology* is "the study of." So anytime you see a word with *-*ology on the end, words like biology, cryptology, symbology, ichthyology, it's the study of whatever the first part of the word means. Eschatology is the study of last things or the last in a sequence of things, in our case the last things in the sequence of history.

Since we're going to study the last things in the sequence of history we ought to understand a few things about history. There are three basic views of history that men have come up with. There's the circular view of history and this is the idea that most of us got in the public education system and that is that history is a series of kingdoms rising and falling, rising and falling. The cyclical view can be either optimistic or pessimistic. The pessimistic view is that each kingdom gets worse and worse. Oswald Spengler in his *Decline of* the West traced the cycles of rise and fall of kingdoms but the trend Spengler said was down, each kingdom gets worse and ends in self-destruction. Then you have the optimistic view and this view sees each kingdom as getting better and better. Arnold Toynbee, famous British historian, in his A Study of *History*, traced over twenty civilizations that rose, prospered and failed in a cyclical fashion over the course of time. His conclusion was that civilization was moving upward toward a golden age when the major monotheistic religions of the world would merge and lead humanity to peace and prosperity worldwide. This is the evolutionary view of history where progress is being made as we advance toward a utopian kingdom. That's the eschatology of communism. Understand everyone has an eschatology. Communism has the dream that through its economics it will bring about a

revolution that will usher in a perfect human kingdom. So understand it's not just the Bible that has an eschatology, everyone has an eschatology. And anytime you hear someone saying, the court *should* make this decision or this is what *ought* to happen they are setting forth their eschatology. You could ask, on what basis should we decide this and not that? Because obviously the person making the decision has an end goal that he or she wants to have realized. And whatever that end goal is is an expression of the person's eschatology. So if you listen closely you can pick up on all kinds of eschatology's floating around. That's the first kind of history: it is cyclical and it has two variants, pessimism, that's going down, and optimism, that's going up, getting better.

A second view of history is what was made famous by an alleged Henry Ford quote. Ford said, "History is just one damn fact after another." That is, history is meaningless, there is no purpose, no end, no goal, it's just a jumble of random, meaningless events. History is going nowhere. This is a pessimistic view of history but the one widely held among our contemporary generation. No one knows and no one cares and so anything goes. There's an ethic attacked to your eschatology.

The third view of history is the linear view of history and in this view you have pagan linear and biblical linear. In the linear view there is a sequence to history and there is a goal or an end but the means to the goal or end and the end itself varies. In the pagan linear view for example, various factors determine the direction history is moving, some people believe humans move history. The great people of history - Alexander the Great moves history, Martin Luther moves history, Alexander Graham Bell moves history, Barack Obama moves history. So the great men of history are the primary factor in moving history toward some conclusion. Others hold that natural law moves history, that the laws of nature are determining the direction history takes. And history is just physical, chemical and biological events. Where is this history going? Well, if there's not enough matter in the universe it will continue to expand and then it will end in a cold, lifeless, frozen death or if there is enough matter then the universe will contract and it will end in a hot, lifeless, burning death. There are other factors claiming to control history in the pagan view but that basically is the linear pagan view of history.

The Biblical view of history is also linear. Kingdoms may rise and fall in a cyclical pattern but these kingdoms are part of the plan of God toward a definite and purposeful end. Isaiah 46:9-10, "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, <sup>10</sup>Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure" God created the ages or history, Heb 11:3, "By faith we understand that the ages were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible." That is, historical progress is not coming out of prior events or choices, it's coming about by the word of God. And God created the various kingdoms and determined their times, their rise, their fall. Acts 17:26, "and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, <sup>27</sup>that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;" So there is a plan and there is purpose to history. History is personal, it is not an impersonal universe, it is deeply personal because there is an infinite personal God who created it and controls it. It has a beginning point, creation, it also has a definite means of progressing, the word of God, and it has a definite ending point, judgment and separation. And the purpose of history is the glory of God in Christ, the Messiah.i

Now we are studying the final direction of history or last things in the sequence. Turn to 1 Cor 10:32. There are various people groups in history. When Paul writes this history has already progressed through the Gentile period, what we call the antediluvian world, the pre-Flood. Those people weren't Jewish, they weren't the Church, they were descendants of Adam, they're Gentile, then a subset of those Gentiles, eight people to be exact, Noah and his family survive the waters of the Flood and re-populate the new world. They rebel at the Tower of Babel and God judges by dividing the languages and for the first time in history we have nations and at the same time God gave humans the right to govern other humans. Out of those nations God called Abraham and He created the nation Israel to serve a special purpose in history, to be the conduit of revelation and to give the world the Messiah. When the nation Israel rejected her Messiah and crucified Him, He is raised from the dead, ascended and sent the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. On the day of Pentecost a new people came into existence called

the Church. So 1 Cor 10:32, there are your three basic people groups in history; "Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God;" there aren't four different groups, there aren't 44 different races, there are only three people groups. And it's how you weave these three groups of people together into a grand schema for history that we are struggling with in eschatology.

Obviously a central idea here is that the Church is not Israel. There are differences between them. This is the essential thing and it's the thing that we have to understand as we proceed into eschatology. So we're going to primarily talk about the destiny of Israel and the destiny of the Church.

As far as origins are concerned Israel came into existence first. And we know from the OT that God has a plan for Israel, an historical sequence they would follow, which we will study in detail next week. But the plan basically was that the nation Israel would rise, it would fall, be set aside temporarily when it rejected its Messiah, and then it would rise once more. So Israel's kingdom will be restored but right now they are temporarily set aside for a time and then God will pick them back up and deal with them in the future by saving her and restoring her to her kingdom.

The Church's origins came about only after Israel rejected her Messiah. So their origins are very different. And the plan of God for the Church is also very different; it's much simpler than Israel because it's all together so to speak, there are no breaks like there are in Israel's plan. The Church formed and the Church will be completed and the Lord will come for His church. Then He will pick Israel back up and work with them.

But to really grasp the significance of the Church's destiny, we have to understand how the Church's historical existence differs from that of Israel. And that's what we want to compare this week. Are there any indicators that help us see a difference between how the end comes for Israel vs how the end comes for the Church? Are there any factors that apply to Israel that don't apply to the Church? Let's list two key differences that distinguish Israel from the Church.

The first one is quite important when it comes to prophecy and we're going to look at several verses here. Israel had a Calendar-Based Existence whereas

the Church does not share a Calendar-Based Existence, it's non-calendar. Here's what I what mean, Israel received indicators of the timing of its destiny in terms of calendar time; the Church's destiny isn't related to calendar time at all.

Turn to Gen 15, let me give you examples. Here's how Israel's march through history is described in Scripture. It's characteristic of God's program with the nation Israel. By the way, we're not saying either Israel or the Church is more important than the other. You should see on our bulletin each week that we pray for Israel and the Church. The Church isn't more important than Israel and Israel isn't more important than the Church. They're both important. It's just that we're trying to emphasize that there are noticeable differences between them and therefore they are not the same thing in God's plan. In Gen 15:13, all the way back with Abraham, this is even before it became a nation, when you just had the father of what would grow into the nation; Abraham. Look at what Gen 15:13 says, "And God said to Abram, 'Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed" for how long, "four hundred years." Calendar time, Israel's destiny is measured in calendar time. You can count the years and see how far along you are in the plan. You don't see those kinds of passages in the NT. Where did you see the Church is going to do this for 450 years? You don't read that in the NT. You only read that in the Old Testament for the nation Israel.

Let's go to Jer 25:11-12, here's another example. Let me give a little time line so you can connect this in your head and it makes sense. Start with OT history, then the Call of Abraham, God makes the Covenant with Abraham, then you have Isaac, God repeats the Covenant to Isaac, then Jacob and God repeats the Covenant to Jacob. And from this point forward God is referred to as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob because they are the Covenant people. Then Jacob and his family go down to Egypt, they were about 70 people. They are there for 400 years like the prophecy said and finally you have the Exodus. By the Exodus the family had gotten a lot bigger, 2 million and they come out of Egypt. That's the Exodus. The nation Israel was born out of the womb of Egypt. So the birth of the nation is 1445BC. The nation marches to Mt Sinai where God gives the nation a Law. A nation has to have Law in order to have stability. So God gives them the Law, this is how I want you to live. They don't live that way so they wander around in the wilderness

for about 40 years until Moses dies and Joshua rises to become the next leader. He takes them into the Promised Land, that's the Conquest and Settlement period; they conquer and settle part of the Land. They go through a long period of Judges. Finally the nation asks for a king, God gives them Saul, he fails, God chooses David, David reigns, His dynasty is given an everlasting dynasty promise, Solomon reigns, then the Kingdom divides into the northern and southern kingdoms, so there's a split. Both kingdoms begin to decline spiritually, they go negative to the Law of God and God starts disciplining the nation. God had done everything for them, He had created their nation, He had delivered them from Egypt, He had given them His perfect Law, He had raised up Judges, He had given them Kings and He had sent them prophets and over and over they went negative and so God said, I've had it, you're going to get the rod and the nation was disciplined.

What was the ultimate discipline of the nation Israel? Exile, they had lots of other disciplines, military defeat, their economy went to pot, the climate changed on them, and they had droughts. All these things were God the Creator, who was the controller of the environment, disciplining His children. By the way, observe, He's not going to destroy Israel; He's going to discipline Israel. So Israel, and here we're just talking about the southern kingdom, the northern kingdom already went into Exile, this passage is referring to the southern kingdom going into Exile, being booted out of the land. Jer 25:11, "And this whole land shall be a desolation and a horror, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years," calendar time. So Israel is said to be in Exile for exactly seventy years. You could mark it off year after year on a calendar, we're in year 58, year, 59, year 60, Since she went into Exile in 586 BC you would just count the years from there, it was easy, anyone could do it. Take 586 and add 70 years and you get 516. In 516 the southern kingdom would be partially restored to the Land, and who were the two guys that wrote books at the time that they were going back to the land? Ezra and Nehemiah. The point I want to show you is that their time in Exile was timed, it was calendar time. Verse 12, "Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,' declares the LORD, 'for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation." Turn to Jer 29:10 the same thing; "For thus says the LORD, When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place." What's "this place?" The Promised Land.

While they were in Exile, during this period, there was a group of young teenage noble people, the upper class, ruling class, but they were all teenagers when they were taken into captivity, and one of those young boys that was a teenager came to become the Prime Minister of two nations. His name was Daniel. Daniel became Prime Minister of the nation that today is Iraq and he became the Prime Minister of the nation which today is Iran; Iraq and Iran had Daniel, those two nations historically had one of the most brilliant foreign ministers that history has ever seen. So Daniel was involved in these two nations, and Daniel was studying Jeremiah because Jeremiah wrote when Daniel was probably a young boy. So here's the young boy now grown up into his 20's, his 30's, he's ascended in the power structure on the basis of his integrity, he didn't compromise anything but he rose up because he had tremendous political skills that God had given to him and like Joseph he used them wisely. So he's moving up to the top of the political picture in a Gentile nation and in Dan 9 we have the situation.

I'm going to introduce this passage to you but we'll come back to it many, many times before we get through with this eschatology, but this is the passage of Scripture that basically forms the outline of the Olivet Discourse in Matt 24-25 and the Book of Revelation, chapters 4-19. In Daniel 9:1, let's get the context that leads up to this great eschatological text because it's kind of neat. Dan 9:1, "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent," so Daniel is getting this during the Kingdom of the Medes, he had gone into captivity to the Babylonians, also called the Chaldeans, but it's already shifted, the Medes are the new power, "Darius, son of Ahaseurus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans— 2in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, observed," now here he is, he's telling us what he was doing, I "observed in the books the number of years which was revealed as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years." We just went through those two references, Jer 25 and Jer 29. So Daniel was reading those two references because he's a godly man who looks to the Scriptures, he read those Scriptures, and as a politician who knows how to rule, he knows that these texts have implications for foreign affairs. Something big is going to happen here. Verse 3, "So I gave my attention to the LORD God to seek Him by prayer and supplication, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes," here's a real politician, he went to prayer and the prayer meeting didn't take two

minutes here. This is the longest prayer recorded in the OT. And if it's any indication they didn't usually record every word in the prayer, just the gist of it. So the prayer could have been and probably was much longer. Verse 4, "And I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed," and notice verse 5 he's confessing the sins of the nation, he doesn't just waltz in, oh God, you said you were going to restore us after 70 years, now go ahead, the ball's in your court, it's time. No, he walked into the presence of a holy God here and he admitted the nation has short accounts. In verse 6 he gives additional problems with the nation, they didn't listen to the prophets. In vv 7 and 8 he talks about a shame, he talks about the lack of righteousness, verse 8 "Open shame belongs to us, O LORD, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. 9To the LORD our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him; 10nor have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His teachings.... 11Indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside... 13As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us," we're going to study the outworking of that next week, "this calamity has come upon us; yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God... 14Therefore, the LORD has kept the calamity in store and brought it on us; for the LORD our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has done, but we have not obeyed His voice. 15And now, O LORD our God, who have brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand... we have sinned, we have been wicked. 160 LORD, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers... 17So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant..." It's this big long prayer of confession and requests for grace in restoration. Verse 20, "Now while I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God in behalf of the of the holy mountain of my God, 22while I was still speaking in prayer, then the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously, came to me... 22And he gave me instruction and talked with me and said, 'O Daniel," now this is the angelic messenger from God, Gabriel; he's a top ranking angel who outranks all the other angels. This is the guy that shows up with stars on his shoulder, lots of badges down the front; Gabriel. And he says "He gave me instruction and talked with me and said "Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding. 23At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell you, for

you are highly esteemed; so give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision."

Now here we come to the great eschatology passage and you want to watch the word "seventy," watch the numbers here, this is calendar time and that's our point, Israel is on calendar time, the Church is not. Verse 24, "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city," now what's a week? It's a translation of the Hebrew word that just means, "a seven," so he's saying seventy groups of "seven." Well is it seventy groups of seven days, seventy groups of seven months? What is it? The only unit given anywhere in the context is way back in verse 2. What was Daniel reading about in verse 2? About seventy years in exile. So what's the unit of the seventy groups of seven? Years. And if we do the math, seventy groups of seven years is how many years? 490 years. "Seventy weeks," or 490 years, "have been decreed for your people and your holy city to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place." There are six things there that have to come to a completion. Verse 25, "So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress." So verse 25 gives us a starting point for counting the 490 years. Verse 26, "Then after sixty-two sevens the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; and desolations are determined. 27And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abomination will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."

The main point is that Daniel was studying the book of Jeremiah and his conclusion was that the seventy years Exile down in Babylon was about over and so the return to the land is near. That's not a problem. That's true, that prophecy will literally be fulfilled. But God expands things to give Daniel a bigger picture. Not all Jews are going to be involved in this soon restoration, and this restoration is only the southern kingdom, it's not the northern kingdom. So what God does for Daniel here in sending Gabriel is that I'm

going to magnify this prophecy so you see the entire nation restored and that's going to take 490 years to complete. It's broken into chunks. He says seven weeks and sixty-two weeks in verse 25 and some details are given in that calendar. Then in verse 26, picking up "after sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary." So you have the first seven broken away, the first 49 years, then you have sixty-two broken away, sixtytwo times seven is 434, the total of the 49 and 434 is 483 years, then you have the rest of verse 26, "after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing," that's the crucifixion, "and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city," who destroyed Jerusalem? Rome destroyed Jerusalem. Who then is the "prince who is to come?" If the people are the Romans, AD70 then the prince who is to come is also Roman. So this is why you hear of a Revived Roman Empire. Here's a prince who is a Roman who will rise to power. And that's why everybody looks to Europe and they're trying to find a 10 nation confederacy in Europe; forgetting that the ancient Roman Empire extended beyond modern Europe all the way into Iran.

But nonetheless, what is this man who is to come going to do? Verse 27 tells you what he's going to do. He's going "make a firm covenant with the many for one seven," there's a seven year period he's going to make a treaty with the leadership of Israel for one seven, that's seven years. And "in the middle of the seven," what's the middle of seven? Three and a half. Three and half years into that seven year period "he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering," in other words, he's going to interfere with a future temple that apparently is functioning. This is Israel's destiny, so somewhere out in the future, this is all future, this guy out of the ancient Roman Empire is going to rise to power, make a treaty with the leadership of Israel for seven years. In the middle of that seven years he's going to break the treaty by interfering with the temple sacrifices that are going on. So obviously to be offering sacrifices they have to have a functioning temple.

That's why prophecy students are looking at the city of Jerusalem right now. There are Jews right now in the city of Jerusalem down at the Temple Mount Institute, who have started building everything necessary for a functioning temple. They have built the seven branched golden lampstand, they've built utensils, they've been training Cohen, priests, they are trying to get a red heifer because you have to have a ceremonially perfect red heifer to cleanse

the altar in preparation for sacrifice, they have done all sorts of preparations. You can imagine this is a sore point over in Jerusalem. Because who has police up on the Temple Mount? The Temple Mount belongs to the Jews, jurisdiction wise, but who are the police on top? They're Muslim, the Muslim Wagf. And do you think they're going to let them come up there and take down the dome of the rock and put up a temple? Ha, if a local rabbi even thinks to go up on the temple mount there's a big commotion. And yet, that's the place this temple is going to be built. You can speculate how this thing is going to get removed. Is it going to be blown up by a nuclear weapon? Are the Muslims going to be expelled from the temple mount? I don't know. My guess is we won't see it; Antichrist will remove it himself because he wants to build the temple of God so he can take it over and reign from it. He's not too original, has to steal the plans from God. But it's all a speculation. The only thing that's not a speculation is that a temple will be built there. But look at the precision of these times on Israel's calendar, seven sevens, event happens, then sixty-two more sevens, more events happen, then the final seven, antichrist makes his treaty with the nation Israel the temple must be there because they're sacrificing, three and a half years in an event happens, boom. Look at this; this is remarkable and if you traipse over to Matt 24 you see a similar, but expanded sequence, then to the book of Revelation a much greater expansion

That's all details. My point is not to get into all the details, my point is simply to get you to see that Israel, when you conceive of her history, must be conceived in terms of calendar time. You do not see that in the NT. What epistle ever speaks of the Church's history in terms of calendar time? I never read one. If you ever hear of anyone setting dates where must they be getting the numbers to set the dates? Somewhere from the OT. Somehow they must be tying the Church in to Israel's Calendar. because the Church doesn't operate on a calendar.

Alright, that's one difference between Israel and the Church that has to be figured in when trying to write an eschatology. A second difference is that the enemies of Israel are always earthly nations. Think about OT Israel and what comes to mind? The Philistines, the Moabites, all earthly enemies. What does this imply? If their enemies are always earthly then what's the issue involved there? The land, living in the Promised Real Estate. Israel constantly was concerned about living in peace within her land. And what do

you find throughout the OT? You find the Philistines attacking Israel, you find the Moabites attacking Israel, you find the Babylonians attacking Israel. There's a fight to live in the land peacefully. And they never had peace did they? They never had the entire real estate safe and secure. It was a constant fight. Of course we're not denying there was spirituality to it because clearly if they obeyed the Lord then they conquered and enjoyed peace in the land. But if they rebelled then they were defeated and lost property, lost security. Sure, they were aware of the demonic powers behind the other nations. But that didn't change their primary battleground. They had to go out and fight earthly powers in order to inherit their promises. So right here we have a promised inheritance that for Israel is an earthly inheritance.

But now we come to the NT and what are the enemies of the Church? Iran? Iraq? Germany? Afghanistan? What? No, our enemies aren't defined politically. They're defined in Eph 6 as the princes and principalities of darkness. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers of darkness." So the Church is waging a war that is being fought in the heavenly places, it's not here on earth, it's not going down and shooting a terrorist with your Colt 45. You may do that but that terrorist is not the number one enemy of the Church, even if he's attacking a member of the Church, that's not enemy number 1. Enemy number 1 is the demonic powers that are deceiving, manipulating, attacking, accusing. Daily you are being attacked in all kinds of trials and temptations and you have to put on the armor of God. Not shields and field boots and a helmet, but spiritual armor, the positional truths we mentioned last week, things like the imputed righteousness of Christ, things like the truth, and putting them to work with in the experiential, using the faith technique, using the word of God to fend off the deceptions. That's the battle. And the remarkable thing is that as this heavenly conflict is being waged, which is an invisible conflict to our eyes, but very real, and as we walk by faith, guess what happens in that invisible conflict? There's a victory that is won. Somehow progress is made and the church advances one step closer to its destiny.

So that is very different than Israel; Israel's primary enemy was surrounding earthly nations and the land was central, peace in the land, the Church's primary enemy is surrounding heavenly powers and our position in Christ, seated in the heavenlies is central, our position in Christ. See, these are not the same thing, try as you may to get Israel and the Church together they

keep butting up against one another. I've given you two examples, Calendar-Based History vs Non-Calendar Based History and Earthly Enemies vs Heavenly Enemies.

Next time we'll work with Israel's progress down through history on their Calendar because that is essential to clarify before you can get the OT eschatological terms clarified. Then we can move on to the Church and where the Church fits in the grand scheme.

Back To The Top Copyright (c) Fredericksburg Bible Church 2012

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>i</sup> Several of these ideas came from Ron Merryman, *Toward a Biblical Philosophy of History: Seeing History as God Sees It*, a paper delivered by Dr Merryman at the Chafer Theological Seminary Pastors Conference, March, 2008.