

## **PPH Brethren Church**

### **Eschatology – session 1 (8 January 2006)**

#### **WHY STUDY ESCHATOLOGY**

1. Eschatology is the doctrine of the last things. It is the study of the things pertaining to the last days. People are interested to know what the future holds. In the East we consult medium and spiritist. In the West they have crystal ball gazing. Even those who are not religious pay money to listen to experts who can make predictions about the future. In one episode of the documentary “Taiwan to the world”, a temple medium said something to a woman that was not good. She told the interviewer that she will not believe what was told to her.
2. People are interested in news that gives hope because the times are perilous. However Bible prophecies are full of warnings of hardship, persecution, difficult days and terrible events. For the non-believers they will lose interest quickly if what they need to know is not what they want to hear. For the Christians we have a different problem. We want to know and accept what we know. But Bible knowledge is not enough.

2 Peter 3:3 “First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own desires. They will say, “where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.”

3. In other words, when the wait is long, even with what we know about the future we will be complacent. Jesus addressed this attitude in Matthew 24:36-51. IN Noah’s days people were living in careless ease. In the parable of the 10 virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) Jesus spoke about complacency. This is a dangerous attitude to have – to think that the Lord’s coming is not going to happen so soon. What is “soon”? (100 years’ time?). It is true that the Lord’s return may not be “soon”. The God is greatly concerned about our attitude. 2 Peter 3:10 “The Lord of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief.” The lack of expectancy will result in the lack of preparation.
4. Why do we study eschatology? It is not to satisfy our curiosity or only for the sake of increasing our Bible knowledge. We must be prepared for the unexpected. In a game of charade we watch the hourglass. We will look at all major events that must take place before the Lord’s return. In the light of prophecies already fulfilled in our lifetime we look at prophetic “hour glass” and discern whether we are indeed living in the last days.

2 Pet 3:11-14 “Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives, as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. . .make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.”

5. The knowledge of the future should affect behavior in the present, if there is a conviction that Christ’s return is imminent. When we do not hold on to the hope of His return, we will not be inspired or be emboldened to be a witness to the world. Let us remain awake, expectant, ready to meet the Lord.

#### **WHAT IS IN THE HOURGLASS?**

6. Christians do not doubt that the Lord will return. There are numerous references to the Lord’s 2<sup>nd</sup> return. We want to know the sequence of events. When we get the big picture from the Bible, it would be very interesting when to follow world news and technological breakthroughs and see how each piece of information fit into the bible jigsaw puzzle.
7. Many Bible prophecies concern events too far ahead of the time of the writers. It was beyond their ability to imagine or comprehend. In our generation these same prophecies is comprehensible. The picture of the future is clearer because many pieces of jigsaw puzzle are already in place. One example is found in Revelation 11:8,9. The two witnesses who would be over powered and killed and their bodies will be on display for 3½ days. Men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies. With TV and satellite dish, it is not so hard to imagine.

8. The disciples asked Jesus (Matthew 24:1-35), “Tell us, when will this happen, and what will be the sign if your coming and of the end of the age?”

**(I) EVENTS NEAR THE END**

- (a) verse 5 – Many will come in His name, claiming to be the Christ and deceive many
- (b) verse 6 – We will hear of wars and rumors of wars
- (c) verse 7 – Nations will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom
- (d) verse 7 – There will be famines and earthquakes in various places  
[All these are the beginning of birth pains – verse 8] [But the end is still to come – verse 6]

**(II) EVENTS NEARER TO THE END**

- (e) verse 9 – “THEN you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me.”
  - (f) Verse 10 – Many will give up their faith.
  - (g) Verse 10 - There will be betrayal and there will be hatred
  - (h) Verse 11 – False prophets will appear and deceive many
  - (i) Verse 12 – There will be increase in wickedness
  - (j) Verse 12 – The love of most will grow cold [2 Tim 3:1-9]
  - (k) Verse 14 - Evangelistic efforts will increase and the gospel will reach all corners of the earth
  - (l) Verse 14 – “And THEN the end will come.”
9. Jesus gave an overview of what to expect in the last days. It is like the content page of a thick book. A more detailed account of each event is found in Revelation 6, 7 and 8. Each of the 7 seals relates to an event mentioned in Matthew 24.

**(III) EVENTS VERY NEAR THE END - Matthew 24:15-31**

- (m) verse 15 – The abomination that causes desolation
  - (n) verse 21 – There will be days of great distress unequalled from the beginning of the world
  - (o) Verse 23 – More false Christ, false prophets with power to perform great signs and miracles
  - (p) Verse 29 – Something will happen to cause the sky to be darkened (cosmic blackout)
  - (q) Verse 30 – Jesus will come in power and in glory and all the nations of the earth will mourn
10. For session 1 we will look at prophecies that are fulfilled [“the sand on the bottom of the hourglass”]. Fulfilled prophecies have clarified the prophetic picture of the end times.

Luke 21:20 “When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near.”

Luke 21:29 “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you will see for yourselves and know that summer is near.”

**JERUSALEM TRAMPLED**

11. Luke 21:24 was fulfilled in AD 70. The Jews revolted against the Romans. The Romans brought hell on Jerusalem, smashing everything and tearing down all the walls except three towers and one section of the wall of the temple. According to God’s warning Deuteronomy 28:64, the Jews were scattered to all parts of the world. Jerusalem became desolate for 1900 years, trampled by one Gentile empire after another from AD 70. After the Romans, the Moors, the Arabs, the Saracens, Crusaders, Turks and the British.
12. In AD 638, King Caliph Omar (Muslim King) captured Jerusalem from the Byzantine Empire and shortly after he built the Al-Aksar mosque and the Dome of the Rock on the temple site.

Luke 21:24 “Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”

Deut 30:4,5 “Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you and bring you back. He will bring you to the land that belonged to your fathers, and you will take possession of it.”

## **THE JEWS DREAMT OF THEIR OWN STATE**

13. Early beginnings of the Jews return to Israel started in Russia in 1880. In 1881, the Russians began to persecute the Jews to the extent of robbing them, killing some and destroying their homes and synagogues. Jews had suffered persecution also in Germany and France. This led to many Jew emigrating to America. In 1881 alone, 22,000 left for New York.
14. In 1897 some Jews in Europe founded the World Zionist Organization at Basle in Switzerland. “Zionists” were people who believed that Jews ought to be able to return to Palestine, their homeland. They dreamt of a Jewish state that would provide a safe refuge for all Jews from all over the world. The problem was that Palestine was inhabited by Arabs [who were alarmed at the prospect of losing their land to the Jews]. Palestine was under the Ottoman Empire and ruled by the Turks who disallowed Jews to buy land from the Arabs. The Arabs would only sell swamps, wastelands and desert lands to the Jews. European Jews donated millions to buy lands. They imported Eucalyptus trees to dry up the swamps. Settlements and roads were built but Jewish population was still very small.

## **JEWS WILL BE PERSECUTED**

15. Both the Jews and the Arabs helped the British to win the war against the Turks in WWI. After the war, in 1917, the British foreign minister (Balfour Declaration) announced the British Empire’s support for the establishment of an independent Jewish state in Palestine. On 2/11/1917, General Allenby walked into the old city of Jerusalem and proclaimed liberation of Jerusalem from Islamic rule after 1200 years. The fig tree started to bud in 1917.
16. But the British failed to fulfill their promise to the Jews because the Arabs protested very bitterly to the British that they wanted an independent Palestinian state for the Arabs. The British tried to persuade the Jews and the Arabs to co-exist peacefully but they failed. Every proposal made by the British were rejected by the Arabs. Both Jews and the Arabs created hell for the British. There were violent protest and uprising. Palestine become an armed camp with 50 forts across the country.
17. Then came WW2 [Jeremiah 16:16 – prophesy that the Jews will be hunted down]. In 1933 Adolf Hitler become dictator of Nazi Germany. He had a particular distaste for Jews and persecution started. In every European country occupied by Germany Jews were thrown into concentration camps. 6 million Jew died.

## **THE RETURN OF THE JEWS**

Isaiah 11:12 “He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth.”

18. The experiences of WW2 convinced the Jews that they needed their own homeland. 30,000 Jewish men volunteered to fight in the British Army. Menachem Begin determined that terrorism was the only way to get the British to fulfill their promise to give them a Jewish state. Between 1945-1948 Britain spent 100 million pounds trying to keep peace. Britain referred the matter to the United Nations. For nine months there were many arguments for and against the creation of the state of Israel. In November 1947 the general assembly voted 33-13 to partition the territory west of river Jordan. The Arab states rejected the resolution and vowed to destroy Israel. By May 1948 the British withdrew all troops and Ben Gurion declared the independence of the new state of Israel.

Isaiah 66:8 “Who has ever heard of such a thing? Who has seen such things? Can a country be born in a day or a nation be brought forth in a moment.”

## **THE SIX DAY WAR**

19. By the time of Jesus, Jerusalem had been under Gentile rule for over 330 years. Alexander the Great captured the Jerusalem in BC 333. He desecrated the temple and stopped all daily sacrifices. He started the clock on “the times of the Gentiles”

20. Luke 21:24. God said that the Gentile rule over Jerusalem would one day come to an end. When the “trampling” ends it would signal his imminent return. The city of Jerusalem had been in Gentile hands for another 2000 years - the Romans, the Turks, the British and the Jordanians.
21. The Arab states never gave Israel the official recognition. In June 1967 the Iraqi President announced “Our goal is clear – to wipe Israel off the map.” The Russians kept up the flow of anti-Israel propaganda. In Egypt President Nasser instigated Syria, Lebanon and Jordan to invade Israel.
22. There was a relentless accumulation of troops in the Sinai Peninsula and build-up by Syria at the Golan heights. The Israelis were convinced that war was inevitable and planned a pre-emptive strike to gain a decisive surprise advantage. Numerically Israel was out vastly numbered by the Arab forces.
23. On 4/6/1967 Israeli planes destroyed 236 enemy aircraft and lost 19. The next day the Jordanian and Syrian airforce were wiped out. The Israeli army broke through enemy lines in Egypt during peak hour traffic in the city. The war was over in 6 days.

### **JERUSALEM RETURNED TO THE JEWS**

24. The heartland of Israel (West Bank), where Jerusalem is, then belonged to Jordan before the six day war. But it was captured by Israel in the six day war on 7/6/1967. After the six day war, the whole of Jerusalem returned back to the Jews [Luke 21:24 “Until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”].
25. Actually Jordan was reluctantly drawn into the war. Israeli forces never planned to enter Jerusalem. They only planned the Sinai campaign against Egypt and Syria. The war against Jordan was totally unexpected. Israel could not fight on all three fronts simultaneously. Israeli PM wrote to King Hussein through the UN assuring him that so long as Jordan kept out of the war, Israel will not initiate a war against Jordan.
26. King Hussein was a reluctant member of the Arab alliance and was obligated to appoint a Egyptian general as commander of her forces. President Nasser deceived King Hussein of Jordan to believe that the Egyptians had shot down a large number of Israeli planes and that victory was imminent. He enticed King Hussein to join in the battle. King Hussein was lured into war with Israel. Hussein’s forces were repelled by the Israeli army. This scenario gave the Jews the excuse to enter Jordan and held the old city of Jerusalem, wrestling it back to Jewish control.
27. Both the Jews and the Palestinians have no reason not to desire peace. But time and again the peace process is sabotaged. The impasse today is because it is not a political issue. It is a spiritual issue that no politician can hope to resolve. It is God’s will that Israel will be formed and it is Satan’s will that it be destroyed. Until there is peace in the land, Israel cannot fulfill her destiny to be a blessing to the nations.

### **CONCLUSION FOR SESSION 1**

28. God orchestrates events according to His purposes. He sits on the throne (Ps 22:3). He writes history. He directs world events. He executes His plans. He makes things happen. The nations belongs to Him (Psalm 22:28). He draws national boundaries. Nations rise and fall but God rules over all (Psalm 18:47). He will continue to influence history to achieve His purposes.

Mat 24:35 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”

29. Reign King Jesus, reigns.