

## Transcription details:

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**James 5:7-9 – A Pretrib Imminent Rapture or An Expectant Second Coming of Christ? - Ep. 10**

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**\*The following is a transcript so it has not been edited for grammar and spelling.**

## Transcription results:

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It's time for the Biblical Prophecy Program with your host, Alan Kurschner of Eschatos Ministries.

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James 5, 7-9 - a pretrib imminent or an expectant Second Coming of Christ? Well, we've hit the tenth episode of the Biblical Prophecy Program and I want to thank everyone for listening. The launch of the program has been more popular than I expected. I'm receiving a tremendous amount of positive feedback from listeners every week, so that is very encouraging. If Eschatos Ministries has blessed you through this program or the website, the blog, book publications, conferences, seminars, and you want to give back to the Ministry, would you consider becoming an Eschatos partner? I want to ask you to commit supporting us on a monthly basis, even just giving \$10.00 a month would be very helpful. And you can go to [alankurschner.com/partner](http://alankurschner.com/partner).

On today's show we are going to examine closely the passage of James 5:7-9. And prewrath eschatology teaches that Christ's return is expectant. What this means is that the expression expectant is that Christ's return, He can return in any generation of the church. Prewrath does not believe that Christ can return at "any moment." There are certain events that have to happen before Christ's return. But the expectancy comes in for every believer, because we believe that Jesus can return in any generation of the church. And the required conditions, events that have to happen before Christ's return can happen within a generation. This is in, of course, contrast to pretribulationism, which teaches that Jesus can return at "any moment," it's imminent in that there are no prophesied events, this is what pretribulationists mean by imminency, there can be no prophesied events that must occur before the Rapture. Because they would argue that if the Bible predicts an event that occur before the Rapture then it can no longer be imminent, i.e. any moment. One of their popular proof texts for imminency, or the any moment Rapture, is James 5:7-9. Let me read that passage. So we're in verse 7, "So be patient, brothers and sisters, and to the Lord's return," the Greek word behind that is parousia, "think of how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the ground and is patient for until but receives the early and late rains." Verse 8, "You also be patient and strengthen your heart for the Lord's return," parousia, "is near." Verse 9, "Do not grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be judged. See, the judge stands before the gates." Some translations have, "Stands before the door." Now does this passage teach an any moment Rapture? This is actually-- I put this passage in the top three proof texts for pretribulationists. If you read their literature, this is in the top three for they believe that actually supports an any moment Rapture, but as we'll see it just simply does not, and in fact just the opposite in terms of vetted, it instructs us in having expectancy, not a so-called imminent return. And there is two statements in this text that pretribulationists cite, that purport to teach an any moment Rapture. The first is in verse 8, "For the Lord's return is near," and the second is found in verse 9, "The judge stands before the gates." We're going to look at the context, because all of you know I'm a big context person, and I know many of you appreciate that, because discussing Biblical Prophecy today so much out there, people lift statements out of Scripture, out of their context, and are very too

quick to make conclusions that the context does not support. So I'm a big context guy. And so we're going to examine, or as we examine this text, again, I want you to keep in mind, this is very important, the pretribulational definition of imminence, which means there cannot be any prophesied events that must occur before the Rapture. So the question is, does this passage teach expectancy or imminence?

Verse 7 begins with the word so, and in the Greek it's *oun*, some translations, I think a little better rendering might be therefore. But therefore, so, they're synonyms for the most part. And so verse 7 begins, it's a transitional conjunction, and it means, what it introduces is the result of or an inference from what precedes. So anytime you read in the Bible and you come across the word therefore or so, immediately you should be thinking, Oh, okay, well, what preceded this passage? There is a certain context, there is something being drawn from the previous section. So it's incumbent upon the biblical interpreter to look at what the context says. So we can begin at verse 7, but we have to look at what is the flow of what comes before, and that is in James 5:1-6. And in this passage, verses 1-6, James is denouncing the rich who are self-indulgent, oppressive and, "Murdered the righteous person." And James says consequently they've prepared themselves for, "A day of slaughter," verse 5. So beginning in verse 7 then, James then exhorts believers to have patients in light of Christ's coming, and he's couching his patience in the context of the persevering suffering as verses 10-20 indicate. And to illustrate this patience for the Lord's coming, James provides an agricultural analogy. He notes, "Think of how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the ground and is patient for it until it receives the early and late rains." So he's using this agricultural illustration to illustrate a point about the Second Coming of Christ. And think about that, if James had this pretribulational notion of imminence in mind, why would he state that the events of the rain and the season, of growth must happen before the harvest. Can a harvest just appear at any moment? No, of course not, I mean there are certain conditions that have to exist before, "the fruit is harvested." So this agricultural analogy, this comports with the concept of expectancy not imminence.

Moving on to verse 8, James states that we need to imitate the farmer who is characterized by patience during the season of growth. And the purpose of patience is to, "strengthen our hearts." And the reason we can have patients and strength in our hearts is the certainty of the Lord's return. It's a fact, it's going to happen, it is certain and that's one of the-- why James says we can have patience and strength in our heart. But pretribulationists however, they point out that James says that the Lord's return is "near" that word near, which they think it means imminence. So they just assume if you see the word near, Oh, that means it's imminent, nothing can happen before. Just because, in other words they say, if something is near, therefore it can happen at any moment. Well, that's not true. Is James contradicting himself by saying there is a growth stage requiring rain, but at the same time stating the harvest of fruit - that is the Lord's return - is near? Well, it would be a contradiction if the word near means imminence, but that's never what the word means, the Greek word is [diesel?] and it never means imminent. Lexically it can mean a draw near or come near approach. So lexically it does not mean imminence, even logically the word never requires that certain events cannot occur first as we saw in James' analogy that rain will come before the harvest. And again, just logically, for example, I can say, Hey, New Year's Day is near, but there are intervening events that have to happen first, for example the Christmas holiday. Next month, next month is Thanksgiving. We can say, Hey Thanksgiving is approaching, it's near, but it's not imminent. I actually have a birthday the week before Thanksgiving, my birthday has to happen before Thanksgiving. So logically, the pretrib argument that this is imminence does not hold water.

The word near, this wording, and this is not new with James, in fact James is drawing from Jesus, Jesus' teaching. Jesus uses the word, that exact same word near, in the Olive Discourse. In Matthew 24:32 He writes, "Learn this parable from the fig tree. Whenever its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves you know that summer is near." You see that, the branch has to become tender first, and puts out its leaves, then you know summer is near, it's not imminent. And James used the analogy here of seasonal farming to illustrate the parousia by showing the harvest of fruit cannot occur "until it receives the early and late rains." And similarly Jesus uses a seasonal analogy of the fig tree. And what's striking about Jesus' instance of the term near is that He used it to illustrate key events that must

happen before His parousia. See, these necessary events are depicted in Matthew 24:4-31. Matthew 24:4-31 and he uses the word near in verse 32. So these events that have to happen before the Lord's return, verses 4-31 include, for example, the depiction of the Antichrist Great Tribulation. So what Jesus is teaching is that when believers witness these events, we will know summer, i.e. His return, is near. But only after the branches become tender and produce leaves.

Next, moving on to our final verse in the passage is James, we go to verse 9. And James instructs, "Do not grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be judged. See, the judge stands before the gates." So for James the [godly?] speech is a motive in his book and this verse, he exhorts believers not to grumble against one another. Perhaps James is recognizing that protracted oppression by evildoers will cause frustration and there may be a temptation to grumble to others. In the previous verse, remember, James uses the parousia as hope for relief, now he uses the parousia to deter believers from the sin of grumbling, "So that you may not be judged." And then James says, "See the judge stands before the gates." And most translations render gates as door, either is fine, gates or door. The Greek term behind that is *thyra*. Pretribulationism claims this is an expression teaching imminence. So this is another claim of pretribulationism in this passage, those say the mention of standing before the gates or the door, Oh, that indicates imminence. But that's not the case. Just as we just saw that the term near does not mean imminence, well the term *thyra* never means imminence. That is, it does not preclude that events will take place before Jesus' return. Instead, actually the image of a gate is intended to evoke certainty and expectancy, nothing more, nothing less. It's flawed to try to read into this imagery a whole theological system of imminence.

Next, just as we consider it the source for James' use of near we should also consider his source for the expression about the judge standing at the door, the gate. And since this is a parousia context it's not surprising that James also borrows this language from Jesus' parousia teaching in His Olive Discourse. Jesus says, "So, also you, when you see all these things know that He is near right at the door," that's Matthew 24:33.

And you can cross-reference Mark 13:28-29 and Luke 21:29-31. But notice this verse is in that exact same context of James' previous statement of His return being "near." I would encourage you to compare James 5:7-8 with Matthew 24:32. Jesus speaks of His return as being, "right at the door." But, "But only when you see all these things," Jesus says. And again, these things Jesus refers to are those previous events He just finished describing, including the Antichrist Great Tribulation. So any notion of imminence is completely dispelled by James' and Jesus' teaching of "standing at the door."

In conclusion, this passage, it fails, it fails as a proof text for pretribulationism. Per James and Jesus' return-- or for James the return of Jesus, it is expectant, it's not imminent. So we have to look at context. Be very careful when you see pretribulationist, they'll throw out all these slogans or proof texts, and you have to be very skeptical, you got to go back to the context and see, Well, where did they get these statements, and you have to ground them back into context. When you do, you discover that, No, they have nothing to do with imminence, they have everything to do with expectancy.

I want to note, actually before we conclude here, I do want to note one final critique of the pretribulationist interpretation of James 5:7-9. Pretribulationists, they interpret this as a "Rapture passage." I keep that in mind, they think James 5:7-9 is a Rapture passage, and one is, I agree with that and you'll know why in a moment here, but they believe it's a Rapture passage that is teaching an imminent Rapture. But, remember, in their theology, the Rapture is disconnected from the parousia, Second Coming, for seven years. And yet, this passage in James is referring to the parousia, in fact it refers to the parousia not once, but twice in verses 7-8. It says, "Until the Lord's return," parousia. And then the Lord's return, parousia, is near. So it's inconsistent and it's a contradiction, a blatant contradiction, in their pretrib system to apply James' passage to the Rapture, while believing at the same time that the parousia separated from the Rapture for seven years. It's just absurd, like it's mentioned, it's a contradiction. And the prewrath position of course rightly views this passage as referring to the Second Coming, parousia, while at the same time it understands that the Rapture is connected to the parousia as an initial event. Paul confirms that as well in 1 Thessalonians 4:15, Paul

notes that those who are left up to the parousia and then goes on to explain that they will be raptured. So the Rapture is one event of a whole complex, comprehensive complex, of the Second Coming of Christ. Of course it's one of the very first events of the Second Coming. And nowhere, absolutely nowhere, and I would debate any pretribulationist teacher on this point, and that is nowhere does Scripture ever teach that the Rapture and the Second Coming is separated by seven years. In fact I will argue that the Rapture and the Second Coming is not separated at all. They're not the same event, as I just mentioned, the Rapture is part of the larger complex Second Coming. The Rapture in resurrection will be one of the very first events in Christ's Second Coming. When Christ arrives, begins His Second Coming, and arrives on the clouds, there will be the ensuing resurrection in Rapture, and that would be, again, one of the very first events of the Second Coming of Christ.

With all this polemic against pretribulationism we should not lose perspective of what James is teaching us here. We're living in a very wicked world and I don't have to convince anyone out there who's listening to the show that we are immersed in a very wicked world and it's only increasingly getting worse. And we can often wonder, how can God Himself be patient with this wickedness and not return to judge this world. Well, we know Peter talks about that He is patient, not wanting anyone to perish. He still has His people, His elect, that will come to Him. And in God's sovereign timing, then He will say, No more, and He will return and He will judge this world. For many believers right now, who are under persecution in other trials, it can be very weary, very weary. Over a week ago there's, I believe, if I'm not mistaken, there was 185 churches burned to the ground in Nigeria. Christians in America, we don't know persecution, we don't. We think we do, but we don't. But it is coming here, it is coming. But James, so this is a pertinent passage for us, James exhorts us to be patient until the Lord's return - parousia. Think of how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the ground and is patient for it until it receives the early and late rains. And James says, "You also be patient and strengthen your hearts."

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