

The Period of Restoration



Restoration (Part 1)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you at the beginning of a new week, sharing with you out of truths that life has taught me, truths that have made the difference between success and failure in my life and can do the same for you.

Let me begin by saying "Thank you" to those of you who have been writing to me. Before I finish this talk we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. Feel free to share with us your personal needs, your problems, your prayer requests.

Today I'm inviting you to view the world situation with me from a perspective that is never covered by our contemporary media, such as the press, the television, the news summaries, the economic surveys. It's the perspective of God's purposes.

As you look out on the world scene today, do you ever feel perplexed and frustrated, perhaps even downright frightened? Sometimes the overall impression is that of a troubled, restless sea, with powerful winds and currents opposing one another and forces let loose that are beyond our comprehension or control. We are subjected to so many pressures today from so many sources. Economic pressures, political pressures, social pressures. Innumerable systems and ideologies compete with one another to gain control of our minds. Rival groups and alliances confront one another with tensions that are not always resolved short of open war. There is the bloc of oil-producing nations. The European economic community, the Soviet bloc, the Third World, the unpredictable influence of Red China. And, right at the heart of it all there is the problem of Israel: surrounded, out-numbered, and continually threatened by Arab nations whose hostility seems to offer no hope of lasting reconciliation. Already that problem has erupted into war four times in thirty years and could erupt overnight for the fifth time. Each such outbreak in the Middle East comes nearer by a margin no one dares estimate to precipitating a Third World War, to be fought with nuclear weapons whose destructive potential has never been calculated.

Do you feel like asking, "Is the whole situation out of control? Is it just a meaningless jumble whose outcome no one can predict? Or is God at work somewhere in it all? Does He have

a master plan that He's working out with all His inexhaustible resources of wisdom and power?" Let me share my conviction with you. I believe that God is at work in our world situation today. I believe that He has a Master Plan, one which He had settled in His own mind before history ever began to run its course. I believe that God will work out His plan to a complete and triumphant fulfillment.

Frankly, if I did not believe that I would be a very depressed and fearful person.

Let me share with you as simply as I can the essence of God's master plan as I see it. To understand God's plan we must first understand His standard of values. We have to see where God's priorities lie. For God, the most important thing is people. It's very important to see that.

Jesus told us in His teaching that one soul, one human soul, is worth more than the whole universe of things. I accept that evaluation. It's God's evaluation and I feel it's right. It agrees with me.

That evaluation is to be applied not merely to each individual person in the universe in our world today but it's to be applied collectively, to God's people. In a certain sense, God's people is the collective sum of those who are committed to Him. And they are His portion in the world.

Deuteronomy 32:9 says this:

> "For the Lord's portion is His people."

The thing that really belongs to God in our world situation today is the people of God. God is committed to those who are committed to Him. The basis of God's commitment is always the same. It's a covenant. We become God's people through entering into a covenant with Him. And once that covenant has been established and ratified by God, then God declares emphatically He will never break His own covenant. He's committed to maintain it.

Let's look at some of the promises that God gave to Israel under the old covenant because the principle applies still today. In Isaiah 41:10 God says to Israel:

> "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

What wonderful words of comfort and encouragement in the midst of so much turmoil, confusion, and insecurity. How good to be able to hear the voice of Almighty God saying, "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you." In other words, the solution isn't on the human plane, the solution is through looking upwards, "For I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you. Surely I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." And then, again in Isaiah 43:2, God says:

> "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you." (NAS)

God does not say that we will never pass through the waters, through the rivers, even through the fire. But God promises us His presence with us all though. And He promises that nothing will harm us or frustrate His purposes of good for us.

God's ultimate plan for His people is always good. We may look again at the example of Israel. In Jeremiah 29:11 God says this:

> "'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.'" (NAS)

That's always true for God's people. God's plans are for welfare, not for calamity; they are to give us a future and a hope. We shall never be without hope.

God's purposes for His people at this time can be summed up in one key word which is "restoration." Let's look at what Peter says to a group of Jewish people gathered to hear him in the city of Jerusalem in Acts 3:19–21:

> "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, And that He may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. He [that is Jesus] must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as He promised long ago through His holy prophets." (NIV)

Notice that key phrase: the time for God to restore everything. That's one translation. Another contemporary translation reads like this: "The period of restoration of all things." You see that in God's ultimate purpose, there is to be a period of restoration of all things and that this period of restoration of all things is closely associated with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. For it says that "He must remain in

heaven until the time comes" for the period of restoration. So, when the period of restoration comes, then we know it is time for the Lord Jesus to return.

Now, it's important to understand that we cannot know the day or the hour of the Lord's return. Scripture says no one knows this, not even Jesus, but only the Father. But the Scripture also declares that we should understand the times and the seasons. So we're not talking about the day or the hour but we are talking about the times and the seasons. Seasons of refreshing and then the time for God to restore everything.

If we look at those verses from Acts 3 we find that this is a kind of simple outline of God's program to close this age. Coincidentally, in the English language it can be summed up in four words, each of which begins with the letters "r-e." The four words are: repentance, refreshing, restoration, return.

The first phase is repentance. And here the responsibility is placed upon us as the people of God. We are called to repent. As we repent then God sends a season of refreshing. And out of the season of refreshing He leads us into the fullness of His purpose which is restoration. And somewhere in the outworking of that purpose of restoration there will take place the dramatic climax of the present age, the return of the Lord Jesus.

It's important to understand that it takes our response to set God's plan in motion. Here we have an example, one of many in Scripture, of the delicate balance between God's foreknowledge and our free will. God says it's going to happen and then He says, "But you're going to have to do something to make it happen." So, although God has declared it will happen, that doesn't set us free from our responsibility.

What is our responsibility to set in motion this end-time program of God? It is to repent.

Let me just say briefly what repentance is. Many people do not understand repentance. It's not emotion, it's a decision. It's a decision to turn from our own way, to stop doing our own thing. Working out our own program, setting our own standard. It's a decision to turn back to God, to submit to God and to allow Him to tell us what He wants us to do. That's the key to our participating in God's program for the close of the age.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I will unfold more fully God's plan of restoration for His people.

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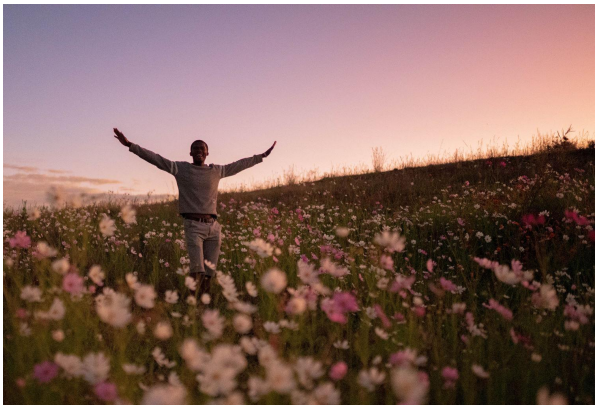

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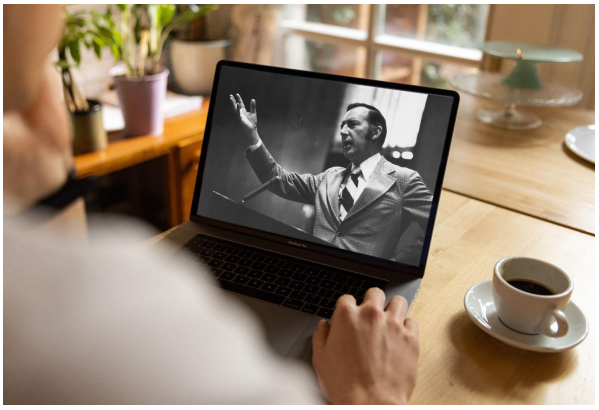

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