

The Fig Tree and the Vine



Restoration (Part 2)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again. As we continue today to look together at the situation in the world, viewing it not from the standpoint of the media, but viewing it instead from God's perspective.

I said yesterday that the overall situation in the world gives the impression of a troubled, restless sea, with powerful winds and currents opposing one another and forces let loose that are beyond our comprehension or control. And yet, in the midst of it all, God is working out His master plan, a plan which he had settled in His own mind before history ever began to run its course.

God's plan centers in His people, those to whom He has committed Himself by His covenant and who are, in turn, truly committed to him. For the people who fulfill these requirements, God's ultimate purpose is altogether good. It can be summed up in one word, "restoration."

Before I go any further, let me define briefly what I mean by restoration. To restore is to put a thing back in its right place or its right condition, or both. The very fact that a thing needs to be restored necessarily indicates that, in some way it has not been in its right place or in its right condition. Now, let's apply this definition to God's people.

God's end-time purpose is to put His people back in their right place and their right condition.

For an overall picture of God's end-time plan for His people I'm going to turn to the prophecy of Joel. Joel is a comparatively brief prophetic book and it presents God's purposes for His people and the way He'll work them out in a simple but comprehensive outline. The prophecy of Joel contains three chapters. Each chapter can be taken to represent a phase of God's total purpose. The word that sums up the first chapter is desolation. The word that sums up the second chapter is restoration. The third chapter deals with judgment. Judgment will come according to how we respond to God's restoration. Those who respond positively will be blessed but those who refuse God's restoration will be dealt with in judgment.

Now I'm going to focus today primarily on the themes of the first two chapters: desolation, restoration. Before I read anything from the actual prophecy I want to point out to you that, in the forefront of the prophecy all the way through there are two very special trees: the fig tree and the vine. In a certain sense, everything in the prophecy turns around the condition of these two trees. When these two trees are desolate, everything else is desolate. When these trees begin to flourish again, everything else flourishes with them.

I believe that in the symbolism of Joel's prophetic imagery these two trees symbolize God's two covenant peoples, the two peoples to whom God is committed by His covenant that he will not break. I believe the fig tree symbolizes Israel and the vine symbolizes the church. I believe that in many passages of Scripture the fig tree often primarily refers to Israel, whereas the vine is a natural symbol of the church.

So, with this symbolism in mind, let me read a passage from the first chapter of Joel that gives a picture of total desolation. And I want you to notice that both at the beginning and at the end of this picture the focus is on the vine and the fig tree. The desolation has been caused by alien forces invading the inheritance of God's people. Beginning at verse 6:

> "For a nation has invaded my land... [And then, going on to verse 7:] It has made my vine a waste, and my fig tree splinters. It has stripped them bare and cast them away; their branches have become white. [Notice, the vine and the fig tree in the forefront and totally desolated. Then the rest of the picture is filled in. Verse 10:] The field is ruined, the land mourns, for the grain is ruined, the new wine dries up, fresh oil fails. [There are three figures there, too. The grain, the new wine, and the oil. In prophetic symbolism, grain represents the source of strength for God's people, primarily His word; the new wine represents the joy, which is also a source of strength; and the fresh oil nearly always represents the fresh anointing inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Verse 11 goes on:] Be ashamed, O farmers... For the wheat and the barley; because the harvest of the field is destroyed. [And then we return, again, to the trees.] The vine dries up, and the fig tree fails; the pomegranate, the palm also, and the apple tree, all the trees of the field dry up. [Notice other trees are included but the focus is on the vine and the fig tree. And then it's summed up in this statement:] Indeed, rejoicing dries up from the sons of men. [Joy has totally withered away from the human seed.]" (NAS)

Now we're going to look at the picture of restoration which comes in Joel 2:21–25:

> "Do not fear, O land, rejoice and be glad, For the Lord has done great things. Do not fear, beasts of the field, For the pastures of the wilderness have turned green, For the tree has borne its fruit, The fig tree and the vine have yielded in full." (NAS)

Notice again, in the forefront of restoration, just as in the forefront of desolation, we have these two symbolic trees: the fig tree, typifying Israel; the vine typifying the church—and their condition determines the condition of the rest of God's inheritance.

And then we have in the 24th verse a promise of the restoration of God's basic provision for His people.

> "...the threshing floors will be full of grain, and the vats will overflow with the new wine and the oil." (NAS)

Notice again the three items: the grain, the new wine, the oil. The grain symbolizing the strength that comes from God's Word, the new wine symbolizing the joy of the Lord which gives strength, the oil representing the anointing and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Then, in the next verse God sums up what He's accomplishing through His intervention on behalf of His people. The key word is "restore."

> "Then I will make up [restore] to you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten, The creeping locust, the stripping locust, and the gnawing locust, My great army which I sent among you." (NAS)

So you see, the central thrust of God's purpose for His people is in those words, "I will restore..." I want you to notice the extent of God's promise. It goes far beyond what we would normally anticipate. God does not merely say He will drive out the invading army of insects, but He says He will restore everything that they have eaten. That's a tremendous promise of God and we need to lay hold upon it.

It was vividly illustrated for me once by an experience I had in praying for a woman who, through some kind of difficulty which she passed through, had become partially paralyzed in her face. As a result, her face was permanently twisted. One corner of her mouth was slightly turned up and the real tragic

thing was she was unable to smile. Well, I prayed for her and stepped back and together with a little group of people that were sharing in ministry, we watched God perform a miracle. In about ten minutes that woman's face changed. Her muscles were released, the color came back, and her left arm and left leg which had also been partially affected by paralysis were completely released. At the end of ten minutes she was a whole woman. And what really impressed me was this: that the lady who had brought her to the meeting looked at her and said in awe, "Why, you're ten years younger than you were when you came." God had given her back ten years of her life in ten minutes.

Everything that the insects had eaten God had given back. That's restoration.

"I will restore" is one of the most beautiful promises in the Bible, one of the most all-inclusive. Restoration includes every area: Spiritual, emotional, physical. It includes God's people as a whole.

Listen, under the Old Covenant in Israel God ordained every fiftieth year to be a jubilee year: a year of release, a year of restoration. This is how God ordained it should be. In Leviticus 25:10:

> "You shall thus consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim a release through the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, and each of you shall return to his own property [or inheritance], and each of you shall return to his family." (NAS)

Well, that's the provision of the jubilee. It's a release from burdens from debts, from exile, from alienation—it's a time of restoration. Every one of God's people returns to his own property that was his by inheritance and the families are reunited and restored. Just think of what it would mean in our contemporary situation if everybody just returned to his own family. Think of all the broken families that would be so beautifully healed. And all that's part of what God's promising us when He says, "I will restore to you the years that the insects have eaten."

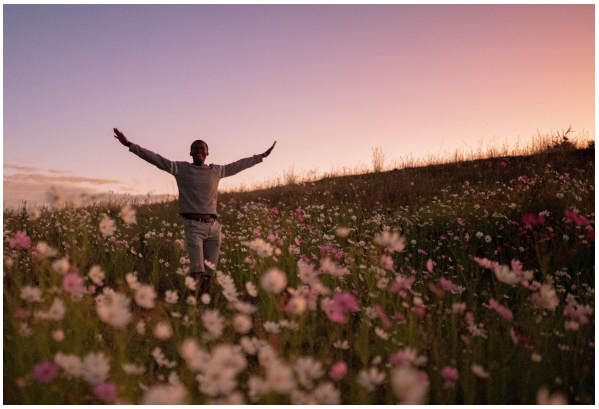
All right, our time is up for today but I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. I'll be continuing with this theme of God's plan of restoration for His people. I'll show you how it's already taking shape in the world today.

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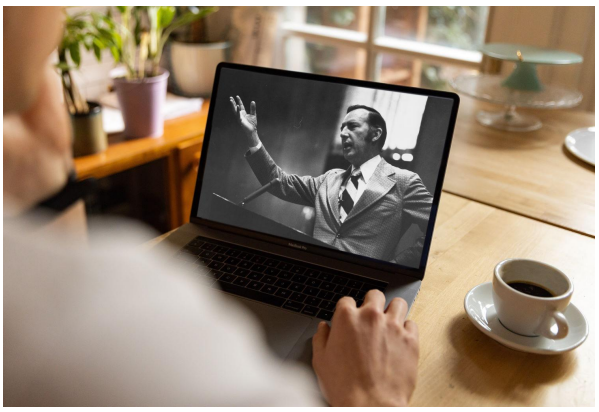
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