

The Sign of Israel



Facing the Future (Part 9)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue with our theme, "Facing the Future."

This week we're looking together at various signs predicted in the Bible which, taken together, indicate that we're approaching the close of the present age. Most of these signs that we've looked at so far have expressed an increase of activity of evil in the world and have affected mainly the people of this world. Today and tomorrow I'm going to speak about signs that express increased activity and intervention by God and which affect the people of God rather than the people of this world.

As I understand it, God has two peoples in the earth related to Him by covenants which He has declared He will never break. Those two peoples are Israel and the Church. Israel formed mainly by natural descent from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the Church formed by a creative miracle of God, the rebirth, through faith in Jesus Christ. But, both of them having their roots in the Scriptures.

Well, today I'm going to speak about a sign that relates distinctively to Israel. Tomorrow I'll deal with a sign that relates distinctively to the Church. Now, speaking about Israel, I want to turn first to Luke 21, which is a prophetic discourse from the Mount of Olives. We studied yesterday the record given by Matthew in Matthew 24; they're parallel, but yet there are differences. At the end of the various signs and trends and events which Jesus predicted, He gave them a parable in Luke 21:29-31. He told them this parable:

> "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near."

Well, that's a parable. We know, if we live in any kind of northern climate at all, that there are main seasons: winter and summer, spring and fall. At the end of winter all the deciduous trees are bare, they have no leaves, branches stand out against the sky, bare, their trunks just covered with bark. And, for me personally, it's pretty hard to distinguish one kind of tree from another because I'm no expert. But then something begins to happen. Those tender little green buds begin to appear and there's a little kind of greenish haze that

comes around the trees and Jesus says the moment you see that you know something. You know that summer is coming. You don't have to go to a university or a library or even a church or a synagogue to find out. He said you see for yourselves this is sufficient evidence that summer is coming.

Then, referring to His discourse He said it's the same, "When you see the signs I've spoken about, you know for yourselves for sure that the kingdom of God is near at hand." And particularly, He gave them the sign of the fig tree and all the trees.

Now I want to share with you my personal belief that the fig tree there is a picture of Israel and all the trees are all the other nations. So, the sign of the fig tree is when the nation of Israel puts on its buds and then its leaves. It's the rebirth of the state of Israel.

This is always extremely exciting for me because, in the providence of God, I had the privilege of being in Jerusalem when that happened. In 1948, when the state of Israel was born and became a sovereign nation again in its own land after more than nineteen centuries, I had the privilege of witnessing that event firsthand so this is always very vivid for me. I saw the fig tree put on its leaves.

And then later on, I had the privilege also of being engaged in educational work in Africa, teacher training work for African schools and spent five years in Kenya, in East Africa. And this became again very vivid to me because there were all the trees putting on their leaves. I was in East Africa when it was still a British dependency but, within a few years of that time, three nations had emerged: Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. What was that? It was those trees putting on their leaves. And when I used to teach my African students along this line, they were always so excited to know that the destiny of their nations was referred to in the Bible.

You see, in the continent of Africa, since the close of World War II and since the birth of the state of Israel, probably fifty new nations have emerged. What's that? Well, the birth of the state of Israel was the fig tree putting on its leaves. What we saw happen in Africa, in South America, in Asia, all over the world, the upsurge of nationalism was all the trees putting on their leaves.

One of the greatest forces in the last few decades since World War II has been the upsurge of nationalism. Various different ethnic groups have said, "We're nations in our own right. We have our own culture, our own language, our own background, our own territory. We want to be our own, we don't want anybody else to dominate us or control us or direct us." That's the trees putting on their leaves.

It's so remarkable to me that Jesus got the order right: first, the fig tree, Israel; and then the other trees. And particularly in Africa, many of the emerging Africa nations turned to Israel for help, for counsel. There's a pattern of a nation that had emerged in the face of great opposition and had succeeded in surviving and establishing itself. So, I believe that this is an exact application of what Jesus said. "Look at the fig tree and all the trees [Israel and all the nations]. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near."

Now I want to deal very briefly with a few specific prophecies concerning the restoration of Israel as a nation. There are, I suppose, hundreds of such prophecies in the Bible and I'm only going to touch on just one or two to emphasize my point. Beginning in Isaiah 11:11-12:

> "In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the sea [which means all the other continents]."

Well, we've lived to see that happen in our day. God has reclaimed His people Israel from all those areas of the earth's surface. Then verse 12 says something very significant:

> "He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah [that's the Jews] from the four quarters of the earth."

It's important for us to see that God's regathering of Israel back to their own land is also His raising a banner for the nations. It's God's declaration to all the nations that the time has come to set the stage for the close of this age. For all the prophecies that relate to the close of this age, all assume one thing: the presence of Israel as a sovereign nation in their own land. Until Israel was restored, none of those prophecies could be fulfilled. But the restoration of Israel has set the stage for the fulfillment of all those prophecies. Listen to just a few other prophecies along this line. Jeremiah 16:14-15:

> "'...the days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when men will no longer say, As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,' but they will say, 'As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites

> up out of the land of the north [that's Russia and Europe] and out of all the countries where he had banished them.' For I will restore them to the land I gave their forefathers."

We have lived to see that happen. And then let me read from Jeremiah 31, briefly, verses 7-8:

> "For thus says the Lord, 'Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chiefs of the nations; [You see, God wants this proclaimed amongst all nations.] Proclaim, give praise, and say, 'O Lord, save Thy people, The remnant of Israel. Behold, I am bringing them from the north country, and I will gather them from the remote parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and she who is in labor with child, together; a great company, they shall return here.'"

History has seen this fulfilled. I've had the privilege, as I have said, of witnessing much of that fulfillment with my own eyes. If anything is clear and vivid in the Bible to me, it's that. And then, listen to what the Lord says a verse or two further on in Jeremiah 31:10:

> "Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, and declare in the coastlands [or the islands or the continents] afar off, and say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock."

This is a message to all nations. It has tremendous significance for us. First of all, for us as Christians, it guarantees to us that the Bible is still an accurate, up-to-date, relevant book; and secondly, it's a sign to all the nations that God is setting the stage for His planned and predicted climax to the close of the present age. We need to take heed to what God is doing in Israel. It's a tremendous encouragement for all of us who believe the Bible.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be speaking about a specific sign in the church of Jesus Christ.

Radio Program

Transcript: TS-R063-104-ENG
Last Updated: 12 Apr 2023
Website: derekprince.com

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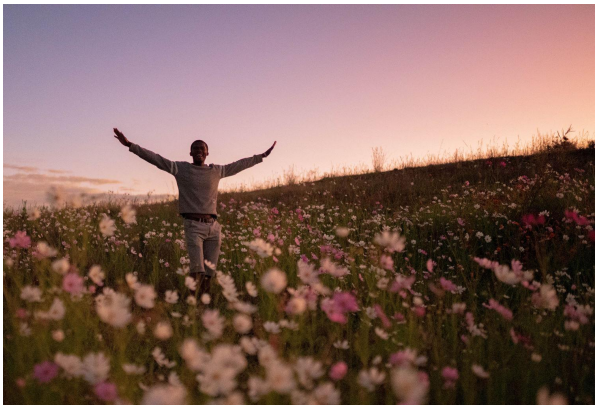

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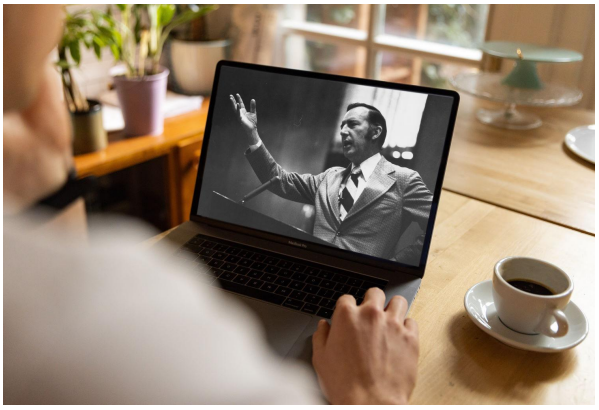

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