

The Sign of the Church



Facing the Future (Part 10)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we draw near to the close of another week. Yesterday I spoke about the sign of the regathering of God's people Israel back to their own land. I pointed out that all the end-time prophecies of the Bible assume the presence of Israel as a nation in their own land. As long as Israel was not restored to its own land, none of those prophecies could be fulfilled but the restoration of Israel, we could say, has set the stage for the fulfillment of all those prophecies and for the enactment of the drama that will bring the present age to its close.

Today I'm going to speak about a sign that relates directly to God's people, the Church of Jesus Christ. This sign may be summed up as a dramatic increase of the activity of the Holy Spirit in and through the Church. This, too, has been clearly predicted in Scripture. We'll turn, first of all, to the words of the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit first fell on the waiting disciples in Jerusalem. As a result of the dramatic supernatural manifestations, a crowd of unbelievers gathered. There were various reactions. Some of them mocked and said that the apostles and the other believers were drunk, to which Peter stood up and gave this answer in Acts 2:15-18:

> "These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'In the last days,' God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.'"

Note, "In the last days," God says, [as this age comes to its close] I will pour out my Spirit on all people." The literal word is "all flesh," the whole human race. There will be dramatic, supernatural manifestations in the people of God. "Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy."

Now, in order to understand more exactly what is indicated by those words, we need to turn back to the original source

which was quoted by the apostle Peter. He said this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel. If we turn back to the prophet Joel in the Old Testament, in the second chapter of Joel, we'll find the prophetic words that Peter applied on the day of Pentecost. In particular, I want to read from Joel 2, two verses, verse 23 and verse 28, and I want to put these two verses together because putting them together gives a much fuller insight into the full scope of this prophecy. Verse 23 says:

> "So rejoice, O sons of Zion [that's God's people] and be glad in the Lord your God; for He has given you the early rain for your vindication. And He has poured down for you the rain, the early and latter rain as before."

And then, the actual passage quoted by Peter is in Joel 2:28:

> "And it will come about after this [and God is speaking] that I will pour out my Spirit on all mankind [all flesh] and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions."

Now God says, "I will pour out my Spirit." Just previous to that, He's given the promise that He will pour out the rain that's due to the land. So, in other words, the outpouring of rain in the natural order is a type or a picture that illustrates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the spiritual order. Having seen this, we need to look more clearly at what God says about the outpouring of the rain in verse 23. He promises to pour down the rain in two major installments: the early rain and the latter rain.

Now, I've had the privilege of spending a number of years in the land of Israel and for me this is very vivid and I'd like to share it with you. We need to understand because if we understand the climate of the land of Israel, this prophesy assumes much greater significance.

In Israel, basically there are only two seasons: summer and winter. There's hardly anything that you would call fall, very little that you would call spring. During the summer season, the weather is completely dry. The summer normally lasts from about April until about November. This is approximate. There can be a difference of a month each way. And, amazing though it may seem to us, during those months no rain falls at all. I spent a summer recently in Israel for most of those months and there was absolutely no rain until suddenly one night in October, which was a little unusually early, I was awakened by an unfamiliar noise. I went out to look out of the window and I realized it was rain. I hadn't seen rain for so long that I hardly remembered what it sounded like.

So, at the end of the dry season, the winter, there comes what the Bible calls the early rain. That marks the beginning of winter and it's a major downpour that will extend over the whole country. After that, for the rest of the winter months, rain will fall, but normally it falls rather unpredictably; here a little and there a little, not covering the whole nation at one time until the end of the winter and at the end of the winter, then there comes what's called the "latter rain." This finishes the winter off. It's the greatest outpouring of all and, again, it's normally universal. It covers the whole land.

So that rain falls in Israel not at all in the summer months, the early rain falls at the beginning of the winter, then there's unpredictable scattered falls of rain throughout the winter and then this final, major outpouring of rain at the end of the winter which is called the "latter rain."

Now, all this is a picture of what God does for the Church through the Holy Spirit. We've seen that the outpouring of rain is, in a way a prefiguring of the way that God will visit the Church with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And particularly, it's emphasized in the prophet Joel, there'll be an early and a latter rain.

Now this is true to the facts of nineteen centuries of church history. The early rain, the first outpouring, fell on the early church in Jerusalem, and probably lasted something like a century. For the church, at that time, it was universal. It affected every area where the church was, it was a normal part of Christian experience, this supernatural visitation of the Holy Spirit. After that, in the terms of the analogy, there came the winter months of church history. The Holy Spirit was never fully withdrawn, He was always active at some place or other, in some group or other but there was no major further outpouring of the Holy Spirit which affected the whole church. And so, we move on to the end of the winter season and then comes the latter rain, the last great, final, universal outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And I believe very firmly myself, that around about the turn of the present century, around about 1900, this latter rain of the Holy Spirit began to fall on the church and is falling today. And I've had the privilege of traveling in all the continents of the world but one amongst many different nations, amongst Christians of almost endless different denominational and doctrinal backgrounds, and my experience is it's falling on the whole church. It's a visitation that's touching the whole church. It's a restoration of supernatural power to the whole church and it's the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. And we need to understand that we are living in the time of the latter rain. This will help

us to understand what to expect next.

Let me just illustrate this briefly for a moment from my own experience in East Africa. I worked training African teachers in Kenya for five years. My primary aim was to bring them the gospel of Jesus Christ, the truth of the Bible. And after a while I found that they were really experiencing difficulty in accepting the Bible as a book for Africans. So I simply challenged them and said, “I’m not going to try to convince you. There’s only one way you’ll know for sure if this book is really from God. If you experience the supernatural power of God in your own life, you’ll know that it didn’t come from Britain and it didn’t come from the United States, it came from God.”

So I went away and prayed and, about six months later, there was a supernatural visitation of the Holy Spirit upon that college of about 120 students and exactly as it’s described in the book of Acts, it happened there. So one day I called the students together and I said, “Now your eyes have seen, your ears have heard everything that’s written in the prophecies of the Bible about the outpouring of the latter rain. I’m serving notice on you now that you know from now on this didn’t come from America, it didn’t come from Britain, it came from God.” And I said, “This is God’s testimony to you young people in East Africa that we’re nearing the summer. This is the end of the winter, the next thing is the summer and the major feature of God’s program for the summer is the harvest, the last great, ingathering of souls into the kingdom of God.”

So that’s a little example of how this specific sign, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is being fulfilled today in the church of Jesus Christ.

Our time is up for today. I’ll be back with you again next week at this same time, Monday through Friday. Next week I’ll continue with this theme of “Facing the Future.” I’ll be dealing with the important practical question: How shall we respond to what the Bible reveals concerning the close of this age?

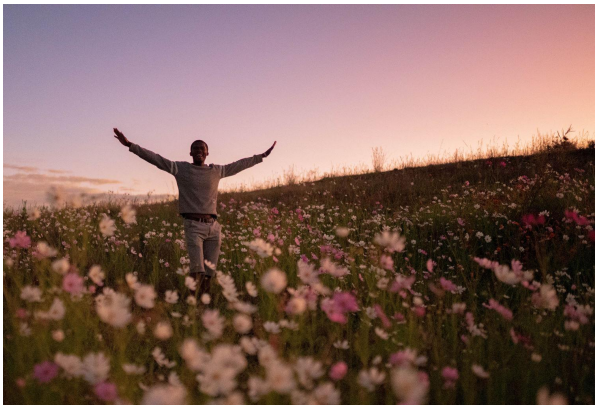
This week I’m making a special offer of my book, Repent and Believe. This book will show you how you can lay a spiritual foundation in your life that will enable you to withstand all the pressures and problems of these closing days and to face the future with the kind of optimistic attitude I’ve been talking about. Also, my complete series of messages this week on “Facing the Future, Part 2" is available in a single, carefully edited cassette. Stay tuned for details.

Bible Teaching Resources



Books

Illuminate and expand your understanding of the Bible with the Derek Prince collection of Christian books.



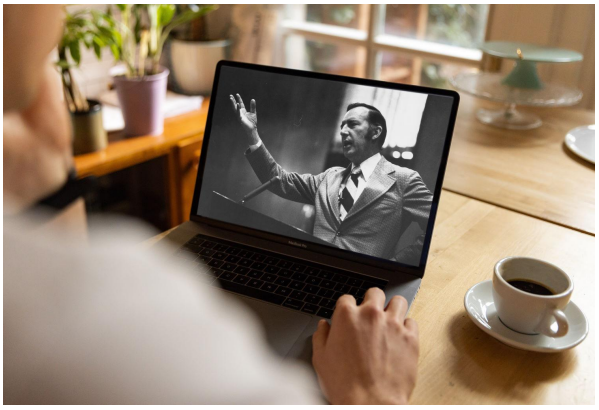
Daily Devotionals

Browse free biblically inspired daily devotionals by Derek Prince for practical teachings to uplift your Christian faith.



Legacy Radio

Listen to inspiring 10-minute messages and connect faith to life with the Derek Prince Legacy Radio podcast.



Sermons

Watch original and digitally remastered sermons by Derek Prince. Includes full message transcripts (free download).



Official App

Available free, download the official Derek Prince Ministries app and equip your faith, anywhere, anytime.



Proclamations

Declare life and experience the transformative power of God's Word with our bible-based Proclamations.

Copyright © Derek Prince Ministries