

The Backdrop



Facing the Future (Part 11)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week, sharing with you keys to successful living which God has placed in my hand through many years of personal experience and Christian ministry.

This week I'll be continuing with the same theme that we've been studying together for the past two weeks, "Facing the Future."

But first, let me say "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. It means a great deal to me to hear how this radio ministry of mine has been helping you and blessing you. So please take time to write, even if it's only a brief note.

For the past two weeks we've been looking together at the picture which the Bible paints of this world of ours as we draw near to the close of the present age. Last week I shared with you certain specific events or trends in the world which the Bible indicates will mark this closing period. First of all, we saw that Jesus compared this period with the days of Noah and of Lot. And I pointed out four main features of those periods of Noah and Lot: first, intense pressure and penetration from the occult realm; second, universal corruption of thoughts; third, the earth filled with violence; fourth, sexual corruption and perversion.

However, at the same time I pointed out there was also a positive side to the picture of the days of Noah and Lot, two main features: first, God warned His servants in advance of coming judgment; second, He showed them a way of survival and sent angels to help them.

Then we looked, too, at the predictions of Jesus Himself in Matthew 24:7-12, and briefly I would sum these up as follows (five main features):

First, international wars, famines, earthquakes and pestilences

Second, world-wide persecution of Christians

Third, apostasy and betrayal among Christians

Fourth, false prophets with cults, and

Fifth, lawlessness leading to lovelessness.

And Jesus used the analogy of birth pains. He said, "When all these things happen, this is the beginning of the birth pains", the birth pains of a new age. And in the natural order, once the birth pains start, we know that they're going to become more frequent and more intense until the birth takes place and we may expect that with these various signs that I've listed, they've going to become more frequent and more intense until the new age is born on this earth.

Then, at the close of last week I dealt with two special signs that relate to God's people in the earth. The first, the regathering of Israel to their own land which has taken place in these last fifty years or so, and I pointed out that this sets the stage for the drama of the close of the age because all the prophetic passages that depict the world at the close of the age all assumed a presence of Israel as a nation within their own boundaries. Before Israel was restored, none of those prophecies could be fulfilled; now the stage has been set for the fulfillment of all of them.

And then the other side, relating to God's people, the Church, the worldwide outpouring of the latter rain of the Holy Spirit upon the Church of Jesus Christ.

This week I'm going to deal with a practical question of vital importance to all of us: How shall we respond to what the Bible reveals concerning the close of this age?

However, before I go into that in detail, I want to paint in the backdrop to the stage on which the closing drama of the age will be acted out. In this backdrop there will be two contrasting color themes: on the one hand, dark and somber; on the other hand, brilliant and luminous. For a kind of general overall impression of this backdrop of the close of the age, I'm going to turn first to Isaiah 60:1-5. This predicts the end-time restoration of God's people in very clear and beautiful language but it also shows the background against which this restoration will take place. This is what the prophet says to God's people:

> "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth, and deep darkness the peoples; but the Lord will rise upon you, and His glory will appear upon you. And nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes round about, and see; they all gather together, they come to you. Your sons will come from afar, and your daughters will be carried in the arms. Then you will see and be radiant, and your heart will thrill and rejoice; because the abundance of the sea will be turned to you, the wealth of the nations will come to you."

I'd like to pick out four main features of that beautiful passage. The first is that both darkness and light are intensifying at the same time. It says there "darkness will cover the earth, and deep darkness the peoples." We see that happening, an ever greater spiritual darkness coming over the people of the earth. But in the midst of the darkness, "the Lord will rise upon you [God's people]... His glory will appear upon you." The message is to God's people, respond to what God is doing. "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you." So both darkness and light are intensifying.

The second element is the regathering and restoration of God's people. "Lift up your eyes round about, and see; they all gather together, they come to you. Your sons will come from afar... your daughters will be carried in the arms." This has been literally fulfilled over the last 30 or 40 years in Israel. Spiritually, it's being fulfilled in the church as the glory of the Lord is returning to the church, the children of God are regathering into the church.

And then we see the third feature, that the nations turn to God's people for answers. This always blesses me. I've always been convinced that we who are God's people should be part of the solution and not part of the problem. But, so many times we're part of the problem rather than part of the solution. But here it says, in verse 3, "nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising." I believe that's going to happen. I believe that both nations and their rulers are going to be at a loss for answers to their urgent and pressing problems. And just as, at one time, Pharaoh the ruler of Egypt, turned to God's servant Joseph for an answer, so I believe, in these closing days nations and their rulers are going to turn to God's people as they're illuminated by the glory of God and endowed with the wisdom of God and we're going to have the answer to the needs and the problems of the nations and their rulers.

Then the fourth feature there is that the resources of the nations are made available to God's people. "Then you will see and be radiant, and your heart will thrill and rejoice; because the abundance of the sea will be turned to you, the wealth of the nations will come to you." I believe that's going to happen, too. I believe we need that abundance and that wealth to carry out the tasks that God has committed to us. And when the time comes and we exercise the faith and see who we are and what God's purposes are, tremendous

abundance of resources is going to be released to the people of God.

I want to point out to you one other parallel feature of the close of this age. I'll turn to the closing chapter of the closing book of the Bible, Revelation 22:10-12. And these verses picture a separation of the righteous from the unrighteous, bringing a situation where compromise and neutrality on the issues of righteousness will no longer be possible. These words are from Jesus Himself to John the revelator:

> "Then he told me, 'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near. [This is right near the close of the age.] Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy. Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.'"

So that middle verse is sandwiched between two warnings of the closeness of the Lord's return. Verse 10 says, "the time is near." Verse 12, Jesus says, "I am coming soon." And in the midst there's this challenge from the Lord to the righteous and to the wicked. It's amazing to me that the Lord would say, "let him who is vile continue to be vile," but that's what He says. I think we understand it even more clearly in the Living Bible version of verse 11:

> "And when that time comes, all doing wrong will do it more and more [the vile will become more vile], good men will be better, those who are holy will continue on in greater holiness."

The picture is the pressures are getting so strong that we're going to be caught up in one or other of two main streams: one is the stream of righteousness, the other is the stream of wickedness. And, as the streams become more and more forceful, it will be almost impossible to escape from the stream that you're in. If you're in the stream of righteousness, you'll be carried on almost irresistibly by the power of that stream. But if you're in the stream of wickedness and rebellion, then you'll be carried on in the power of that stream. And each will intensify. The righteous will become more righteous; the wicked will become more wicked. Rebellion and vileness are coming to maturity.

There are two harvests maturing at the same time: the harvest of righteousness and the harvest of wickedness. And Jesus tells us the harvest is the close of the age.

So, it's a very important lesson for us, both good and evil are intensifying; the gap between them is becoming wider and wider; ultimately it will be unbridgeable. Every one of us needs to make a firm decision that we will be totally committed to God and to His righteousness.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be speaking about our response to this crisis situation.

Radio Program

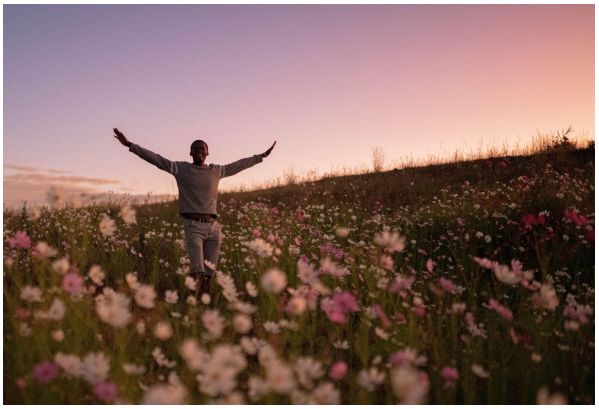
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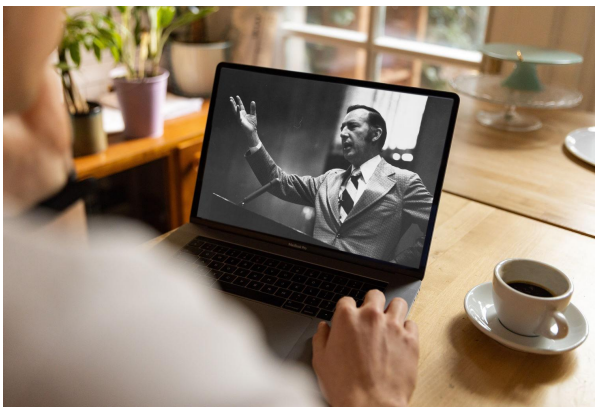
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