

Waiting for the Climax



Waiting for God (Part 5)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we draw near to the close of another week. Today I'm going to continue—and complete—the theme we've been studying this week: Waiting for God.

Yesterday I spoke about the time element in our lives. I pointed out that God invites us to walk with Him. Amos 3:3:

> "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (KJV)

And the two who Amos has in mind are God and man. Can God and man walk together, except they be agreed? Another translation says, "...except they make an appointment." Whichever way you translate it, the essence is the same—there's a time element. If we're going to walk together with God, we've got to get into step with God. We've got to be in rhythm with God, in harmony with God. And that means that we've got to learn to take our time from God. And always, sooner or later, that will involve waiting for God.

Today I'm going to close this series of talks by speaking about waiting as a distinctive mark of God's people on earth. I wonder if you've ever thought about that. One of the things that distinguishes God's true people on earth is that they are a waiting people. This is very clearly stated by Paul in First Thessalonians chapter 1, verses 8-10. He praises the Christians at Thessalonica and says, "You were an example to all the other believers and churches and people in the whole area." And he praises them for two things. Now I'll read this and I want you to notice the two things that he praises them for.

> "The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath." (NIV)

Now Paul praises these Christians and he says, "You were models. You were an example. I didn't have to speak about you. Your own testimony and behavior had already made an impact on the whole area." But what he says was so praiseworthy amongst them was two things that they did. First of all they had been idol worshipers. They had been pagans. They had turned from their idols to do two things—to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven. I wonder if you've noticed that. All of us can understand the concept of serving God as a mark of His people, but what about waiting for God, waiting for the Son of God, Jesus Christ from heaven—that's put side-by-side with serving. I think it's far easier for us as Christians to learn to serve than it is to learn to wait. But learning to wait is an essential part of our life's discipline. And I'd like to ask you again, which is harder: serving or waiting? I'm sure for most people it's much easier to work hard than it is to wait.

I want to point out to you that waiting has always been a mark of God's true people for more than 2,000 years. And waiting carries with it certain implications which are extremely important. I'll mention just four. It means that we are looking beyond our own narrow interests. We're not just wrapped up in ourselves. We are aware that there's something more important which is outside ourselves, which we have to wait for.

Second, it means that we are looking beyond what our own efforts can achieve. We can do so much, but the ultimate necessity is the intervention of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Let's never get the idea that we can do it all without Jesus. We need Him. And if we need Him, we're going to have to wait for Him.

Third, it means that we're looking for something from a higher plane. It means there is something higher than all that's going on on the level of this earth. Most people on earth today don't see anything higher. They never lift their eyes higher than the earthly plane. But God's people are a people who have lifted their eyes to a higher plane.

Fourth, it means that we are looking for something from an age yet to come. It means that we have a hope and an expectation for the future, which is not true of most the people on earth today. There's one thing that marks multitudes of people on earth today, it's an attitude of pessimism. "What lies ahead? What is the good of having children and raising a family? All we're waiting for is destruction by nuclear warfare or some other thing." God's people are distinguished by the fact that they have a hope for the future.

I think in this context of the orthodox Jewish confession which they have maintained for something like 900 years—I believe it was first given by the great rabbi Maimonides—this is how it is translated into English: "I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah, and though He tarry, I will wait for him every day." You see that's kept the Jewish people separate from all other peoples. It's marked them out. They're a waiting people. They're waiting for a Messiah. I'm waiting for a Messiah too. I believe the exciting thing is we're waiting for the same Messiah. But I can say that statement with every bit as much conviction as any orthodox Jew. "I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah, and though He tarry, I will wait for him every day." You know, that puts backbone in a person. You know all the Jewish people have been through, they would never have been able to go through it if it hadn't been for this expectation of a Messiah.

Compare what Paul says to New Testament Christians in Titus 2:11-13:

> "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." (NIV)

You see the same emphasis—we're a waiting people. We're waiting for a blessed hope. We've got a future that distinguishes us from most of the unfortunate people on earth today. And waiting for that blessed hope causes us to lead a certain kind of life. A life that's self-controlled, upright and godly. It's motivated by the fact we're waiting for Jesus to return.

And then in Hebrews 9:27 and 28:

> "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him." (NIV)

Notice, Jesus is only coming to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him. That's one essential requirement of God's people on earth at this time—waiting for the return of Jesus will be our final test of waiting. Then everything will come to the God-appointed climax.

I want to bring out something from the last three parables that Jesus taught, in Matthew chapter 24 and 25. They all have certain things in common. One thing they have in common is that in each of these parables there are people, whom when Jesus comes, He will reject because they have been unfaithful in the interval. The first parable is about the unfaithful servant who was put in charge of his master's household but abused his authority, and this is what it says about him, in Matthew 24, verses 48 and 49:

> "But suppose that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards." (NIV)

And then let's look at the next parable about the wise and the foolish virgins. The foolish virgins were the ones who were rejected. How did that come about? Notice Matthew 25:5:

> "The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep." (NIV)

And then there's the parable of the talents. And of course, there was the one servant that got one talent and did nothing with it and was rejected. And in Matthew 25:19 it says:

> "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them." (NIV)

Have you noticed one phrase that occurs in every one of those parables? "A long time." Some of those people didn't stand the test of waiting. "It's a long time, nothing's happened". "It's not going to come the way God said it would". "We might as well do something else." Those were the people that could not stand the test of waiting. That was the final test. It may well be the final test for you and me.

Finally, and let's note the transformation for those who wait in faith for the Lord's return. Philippians 3:20-21:

> "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body." (NIV)

Notice two things: we are eagerly awaiting a Savior from heaven; and concerning those who are so waiting, Paul says that when He comes there will be a marvelous, supernatural, glorious transformation that will be manifested in our physical bodies. "He will transform our lowly physical bodies so that they will become like his glorious body." There's the principle again: waiting for God is consummated in a supernatural transformation.

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 be sharing on another rich and exciting theme or Scripture.

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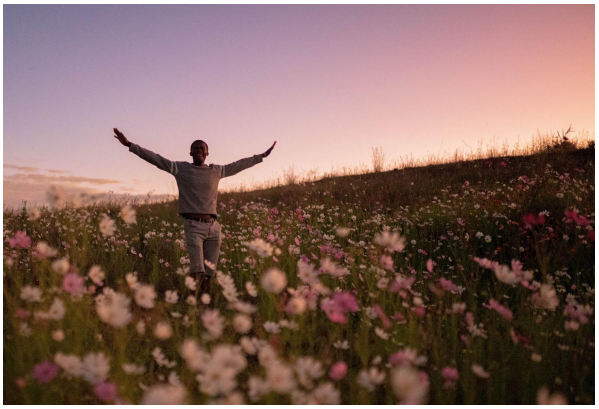

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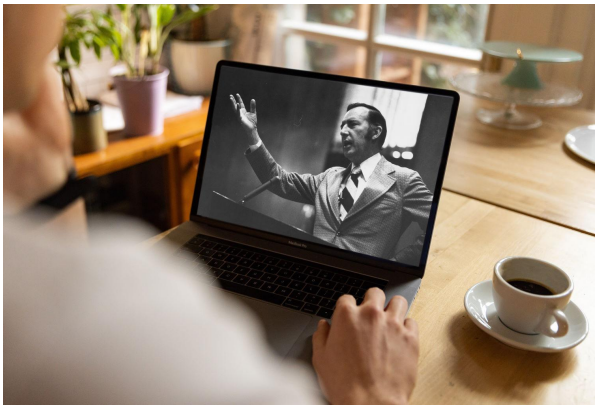

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