

Only Hope for Suffering Humanity



Longing for His Appearing (Part 4)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue with our theme for this week, "Longing for His Appearing."

In my previous talks in connection with this theme I've pointed out that the New Testament indicates that within the church there is a special class of Christians whom God recognizes and this special class is marked out by the fact that they are longing for Christ's appearing, his return in glory. Also, for this special class of Christians God has appointed a special reward of which Paul speaks about in connection with his own life, the crown, the laurel wreath, the gold medal of righteousness. And as we are confronted with this truth from the New Testament I want to urge upon you as I do upon myself, we each need to examine ourselves and say, "Do I fulfill the requirements to obtain that gold medal of righteousness? Am I really actively longing for Christ's appearing?"

And then in my last two talks I gave two biblical reasons why all Christians should be longing for his appearing. The first is that at the appearing of Jesus Christ in glory, our redemption, our salvation, will be completed because we will receive our resurrection glorified body, and not until then. And I pointed out that salvation is total for a total being, spirit, soul and body. It's wonderful to have eternal life, it's wonderful to go in spirit and be with Christ when your body dies but that's not complete. The completion is when your body is resurrected glorious, incorruptible, just like the body of Jesus. That's the completion of our personal salvation and Paul emphasized in Philippians 3 that he was pressing toward the mark that he might attain to the first resurrection.

And then the second reason why all Christians should be longing for Christ's appearing is that it will bring about the consummation of our union first of all with Jesus as our bridegroom, and second with our fellow believers. And so Paul says, "we shall forever be with the Lord."

Today I'm going to share a third important reason and this takes us a little bit out of areas of scripture which are familiar to most Christians. I may be saying some things which you have not heard or not heard often before. But the reason is this: that the appearing of Jesus in glory will usher in

Messiah's reign on earth. We always need to bear in mind that the word "Christ" is the Greek form for which "Messiah" is the Hebrew form. When we say Jesus is Christ we're saying, whether we know it or not, Jesus is the Messiah. And so, all the prophecies concerning the Messiah in the Old Testament relate to Jesus. So, the return of Jesus in glory will usher in his reign on earth as Messiah and will end the intolerable suffering of the whole human race.

I travel widely, many lands, many continents. I minister to many different kinds of people, different races, different cultures, different backgrounds. Traveling as I do I think I get a little glimpse of the intolerable suffering of the human race. And I want to say to you I believe in a social gospel in the sense that I believe the church has an obligation to do all that it can to relieve human suffering. But I want to tell you that all we can do, in the last resort, will be totally inadequate to the needs of this appalling situation. It will take the return of Jesus and the establishment of his kingdom to end this intolerable suffering. You see, man's rebellion brought corruption on the whole realm committed to him right at the beginning. In every area: spiritual, moral, physical, political; all these areas are corrupt. A picture is given of God's view of humanity in Psalm 14:1-3:

> "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds: there is no one who does good. The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside: together they have become corrupt: there is no one who does good, not even one."

That's humanity in its natural condition, apart from the grace of God, and the key word that the psalmist uses is the word corrupt. That's what describes the kind of life that has resulted from man's rebellion and fall. It's expressed in many terrible things that we're familiar with today, alas, all too familiar: fear, hatred, crime, war, sickness, poverty, injustice, oppression.

That's the overall picture of the consequences of man's rebellion against God as we see it in life and in the world today. Furthermore, we have to acknowledge, and this is very important, this corruption is progressive and irreversible. It's not getting better, it's getting worse and it cannot be reversed. This is a profound thought that came to me, all corruption is irreversible. There is no way that we can turn it back. We can delay it but we cannot reverse it. If you take the example of fruit, fruit as we know it today is extremely corruptible. It will quickly wither and rot and perish. We can delay that corruption by putting that fruit in a refrigerator and then it will last much longer but one thing we cannot do is reverse corruption and that's true in the whole realm of this world. Paul speaks about this and its consequence in humanity in 2 Timothy 3:1-5:

> "But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them." (NIV)

That is the outworking in human history seen through the prophetic word of God of the corruption that was released upon humanity by man's rebellion against God. And notice it speaks about people there having a form of godliness but denying its power. A form of godliness cannot reverse corruption. A little further on in the same chapter Paul says "evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived." I want to tell you very emphatically, on the basis of scripture, all this can be changed only by one thing: the direct intervention of God, Messiah's kingdom being established on earth. And this is pictured many, many times in prophecy in the Bible. We'll just look at a couple of passages. First of all, in Isaiah 2:2-4:

> "In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains: it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and cay, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in the paths. The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He [the Lord] will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore."

Now we may piously quote those closing words as a pious wish or as a prayer but the truth and the reality is that they will never be fulfilled until the Lord himself reigns on earth. It's the establishment of his kingdom and that alone which can bring about that.

And then in Psalm 72 there's some beautiful word pictures of what the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth will do for humanity. I'm going to read jut some excerpted verses. And as I do that I want you to notice certain words that are emphasized: righteousness, justice, peace and then God's concern for the poor, for the needy, for those who are oppressed, for those who have no helper. This is repeated again and again. This is God's remedy for injustice and oppression and all their evil consequences. Now listen to these beautiful words which are an inspired prayer for the Son of God, Jesus, the Messiah to come.

> "Give the king your judgments, O God, and your righteousness to the king's Son [that's the Lord]. He will judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice. The mountains will bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness he will bring justice to the poor of the peoples: he will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor." (NKJ)

Notice, he is the one who can deal with oppression and injustice and replace it by righteousness and peace. And without righteousness there is no peace.

> "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, like showers that water the earth. In his days the righteous shall flourish, and abundance of peace, until the moon is no more. Yes, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him. For he will deliver the needy when he cries, the poor also, and him who has no helper. He will spare the poor and needy, and will save the souls of the needy. He will redeem their life from oppression and violence: and precious shall be their blood in his sight." (NKJ)

Notice, final justice and righteousness and redemption for the poor and the oppressed and the needy will come only through the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. And whether we realize it or not, we are praying for this every time we pray the Lord's prayer and we say those familiar words, "thy kingdom come." That's what we're praying for. If we care for humanity, if we're concerned about the suffering of humanity, we will long for this kingdom which will come only with his appearing.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. Tomorrow I'll be sharing with you a fourth important reason why all Christians should be longing for Christ's appearing.

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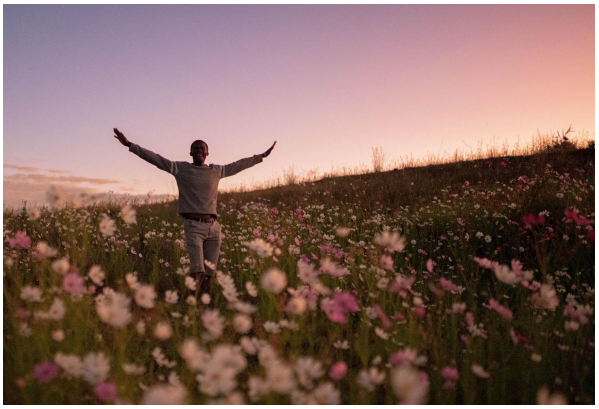

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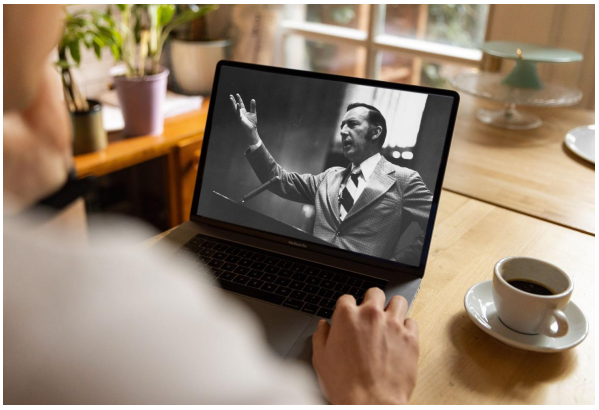

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