


# Watchfulness and Prayer



## Longing for His Appearing (Part 8)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again sharing on this week's inspiring theme, "Longing for His Appearing."

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. Feel free to share with us your personal needs, your problems, your prayer requests. Each month our listeners write in to tell us of prayer requests that have been wonderfully answered.

This week I'm sharing five practical ways in which we should be preparing for Christ's appearing. In my two previous talks I've shared two such ways. First, we need to cultivate personal holiness. I've pointed out that throughout the New Testament the primary motivation for personal holiness is always the anticipation of the Lord's return and I quoted the words of the apostle Peter in which he emphasized three specific requirements: that we should be found in peace, without spot and blameless.

The second main way which I mentioned was that we need to complete our assigned task. We looked at the picture of the bride in Revelation 19:7-8, the bride, that is, the church. And we saw that her clothing was made up of righteous acts. In other words, each righteous act we perform in this life in the service of Jesus will be one thread in the beautiful linen garment that will be our clothing throughout eternity.

I pointed out, too, that we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God has before prepared for us to walk in. So, in order to be fully clothed and ready for that great day, we have to walk out the good works which God has prepared for us to walk in. Paul also said, "work out your own salvation for it is God who works in you." God can only work in us as much as we work out. And so it is an imperative requirement that we are faithful in this life to complete our assigned task.

Today I'm going to share with you a third main way that we should be expressing our longing for Christ's returning and that is by continuing watchfulness and prayerfulness. Let me put those two things together again. Watchfulness or alertness, and prayerfulness.

In Matthew 24:5-13 Jesus predicted a special period as this age closes, what Bible commentators sometimes call "the period of the end time," a period that will be marked with unique pressures and dangers. Here is what Jesus says about this period.

> "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ [the Messiah],' and will mislead many."

The first great warning is against deception and this is characteristic of all the Bible says about the end time. Then Jesus goes on:

> "And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end."

Wars and rumors of wars by themselves do not indicate the approach of the end. But then Jesus goes on with the things that will indicate the approach of the end. And as you listen to this, I suggest that you ask yourself how many of these things are conspicuously present in our current world situation.

> "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. Then they will deliver you [that's Christians, they will deliver you] up to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of my name. And at that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, it is he who shall be saved." (NAS)

Now all these things that I've just read there Jesus describes them as the beginning of birth pangs or labor pains. In other words, they're the indication that a birth is about to take place. What is going to be born? A new age. The age of God's kingdom on earth. And all the troubles and turmoils that we are passing through are the birth pangs, the labor pains, that mark the quick coming of that new age. It's very important to see that.

Suppose a young couple get married and after awhile the wife discovers she's pregnant. And nine months elapse and then she calls out to her husband and she says, "Oh, I have such pain. I have cramps. I don't know what's happening. Something's going on." He would be a very foolish husband is he tried to stop the pains and the cramps, wouldn't he? Because they've been longing for this beautiful baby that's on the way. What does he do? He takes her to the hospital just as quickly as he can because he recognizes the pains and the cramps and all the other things that go with that are indications the birth is at hand.

And so for us in this present situation, to get panicky about the turmoil and the confusion and the upheavals and the dangers would be ridiculous. What we have to say is, "Thank God. The birth is now near at hand. A new age is shortly going to be born."

You see, Jesus instructed us how to respond. In a similar passage in Luke 21:28, having listed the same things that I've read from Matthew 24, He said to His disciples:

> "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." (NAS)

So, it's not a cause for alarm or despondency or losing faith. In spite of all the pressure it's a cause for relief, for joy, for excitement. We don't walk around with our heads bowed down saying, "Oh, what's going to happen next?" We straighten up, we lift up our heads, we're looking upward because the next great event is going to come from heaven and we know when we see these things that our redemption is drawing near.

Jesus gave the example of the fig tree. He said when it begins to bud and put on its leaves, you just have to look at the tree and you know summer is near. Summer corresponds to the coming of God's kingdom. We don't have to go to a library or a university or even the church. All we have to do is look around us and see the fig tree and al the trees putting on their leaves and we say, "Praise God! Summer is soon going to come. The kingdom of God is at hand."

Earlier in Luke's gospel Jesus had depicted another aspect of conditions at the close of the age. This is in Luke 17:26-30:

> "And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it shall be also in the days of the Son of man: they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were

> selling, they were planting, they were building: but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed." (NAS)

That's the day of the Lord's appearing. So Jesus says in certain respects conditions will be very similar to what they were in the days of Noah and in the days of Lot. And He speaks about what people were doing in those days and he specifies I think eight different activities. They were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting and they were building. Now ask yourself for a moment, is there any sin in any of those activities? Eating or drinking or buying or selling or planting or building? No. None of them is sinful. But what's the problem? The problem is they were totally immersed in those things and they had no awareness of what lay ahead. And what would we call that in one word in current English? I believe it would be the word "materialism," and I believe that's a conspicuous feature of this age. Those things are not wrong in themselves, they're normal and they're natural but what is wrong is to be so wrapped up in them that you don't see what's coming.

Special pressures call for special precaution and so Jesus also warns us how we must guard ourselves against these things. In Luke 21:34-36:

> "Be on guard, that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day come on you suddenly like a trap" for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of the earth."

If your home is on the earth, it will come on you. We're here on earth but this is not our dwelling place. Do you understand? Then He went on:

> "But keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." (NAS)

Now Jesus warned us there against three things particularly and they're all aspects of materialism. Dissipation, drunkenness and worries. Now I'm sure most of you who are listening to me are not guilty of dissipation or drunkenness, although you might be guilty of overeating which is pretty close to dissipation, but what about worries? You say, "Well, it's natural to worry." It's natural but God's word tells us not to. There are about 350 places in the word of God where it says we are not to worry. It's the thing that the word of God warns us against more than any other single thing. What's wrong with worrying? Worrying indicates we're living in this earth. We are wrapped up in the things of time, we've lost our vision for eternity. So what's the remedy? Alertness and prayerfulness. Jesus says keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place. If we really know what's coming we will demonstrate it in our lives by being alert or watchful and by being faithful and persistent in prayer. These are our two great safeguards, watchfulness and prayer.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. In my two remaining talks this week I'll be sharing with you two further practical ways in which we should be expressing our longing for Christ's appearing.

## Radio Program

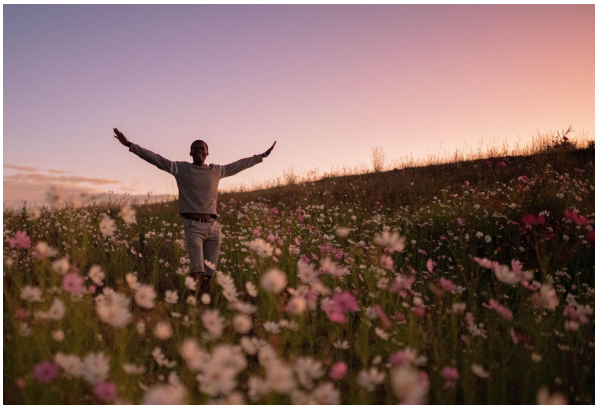
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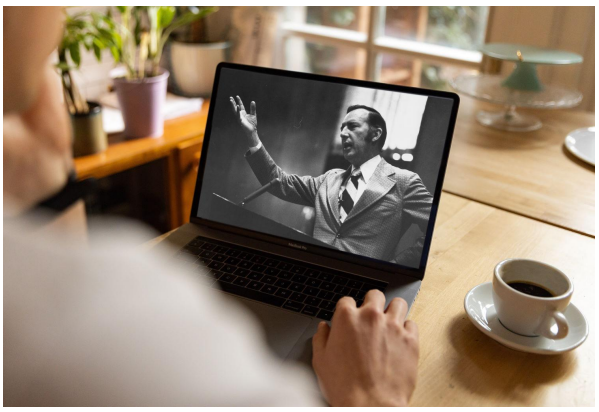
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