

Proclaiming the Kingdom Gospel



Longing for His Appearing (Part 9)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue with our theme for this week, "Longing for His Appearing," a theme that can radically affect your whole way of life.

In my pervious talks this week I've shared with you three specific practical ways in which we should be expressing the fact that we're longing for his appearing, three practical ways in which we should be preparing for Christ's return. First, we should cultivate personal holiness, that's always the theme that's connected with our preparation for the return of the Lord. I pointed out to you that the standard of holiness that the New Testament requires is in peace, without spot and blameless.

The second way we should express our longing for Christ's appearing is by completing our assigned task. We saw that in the picture given in Revelation 19 by John of the bride of Christ ready for he union with the bridegroom, she was attired in fine linen, bright and clean. And John tells us that the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. In other words, each righteous act we perform, each Christian duty that we carry out in this life will be one thread in that beautiful linen garment we're going to wear for eternity.

And the third way is by continuing watchfulness and prayerfulness. This is an essential protection against times of unique pressures and dangers which surround us today. Jesus warned us unless we're watchful and prayerful that day will come upon us like a trap. Only by being watchful and prayerful can we be sure that we'll be ready for that day.

Today I'm going to share with you a fourth practical way by which we can express our longing for Christ's appearing and that is by proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom to all nations. Watchfulness and prayerfulness, as I've said, are necessary to preserve ourselves but Jesus expects us to do more. He does not want us to be self-centered. He requires us to reach out to the whole world with the gospel. And in a certain sense, spiritually as in the natural, attack is the best defense. Don't wait for the devil to attack you, move out and attack him. Invade his kingdom with the gospel of God's kingdom.

At a certain point near the end of Jesus' ministry His disciples questioned Him about His return. This we find in Matthew 24:3:

> "And as he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, Tell us, when will these things be ['these things' were the destruction of the temple and the culmination of this age]... when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?" (NAS)

Notice the main question was, "What will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?", not just the signs but the sign. In the following verses, verses 4-13, Jesus gives various signs, plural, we looked at them in my talk yesterday. Just to sum them up: many false Christs, or false Messiahs; great international wars; famines; earthquakes; worldwide persecution of Christians; many false prophets; increasing lawlessness; decreasing love. But all these, although they are important, are not the answer to the question. They are only signs, plural. But finally, in the next verse, verse 14, Jesus gives the sign and his words make it very clear that this is the sign. This is what He says:

> "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all nations, and then the end shall come." (NAS)

Words could not be clearer. What is the final sign, the final activity of the church that will precipitate the end? It's the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom in the whole world for a witness to all nations and then the end shall come. You see, this sign is connected to Jesus' final commands to his disciples before he left this earth and returned to heaven. These are recorded in two gospels, in Matthew and in Mark. In Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus said these words:

> "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (NAS)

Notice that Jesus had the end of the age in view when he gave that commandment. And he said, "Meanwhile, you have to go into all the nations in the whole world and make disciples out of them and then teach them to follow my commandments."

And in Mark 16:15 the commission there is recorded in these words:

> "He said to them, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." (NAS)

Those words are very clear. There's no possible way of misunderstanding them. We, as Christ's disciples, are responsible to go to all the nations in the whole world to preach the gospel to them, make disciples out of them and we cannot expect him to return until we've done that. Jesus has never revoked this command. The church has often forgotten it but he has never revoked it.

During World War II I spend five and a half years in the British Army and one of the things that was instilled into us continually was "Ignorance of orders is no excuse for disobeying them. You are expected to be aware of orders." Also, we were told that an order stands unless it is revoked by someone with authority to revoke it. Now, Jesus gave this order. He is the only one who has authority to revoke it. It still stands. He expects obedience to it. The fact that we might plead ignorance of it is no excuse for our disobedience.

And so he will not return until we've carried out the orders. That's very simple. This is our number 1 priority and our number 1 obligation to the nations. But Jesus made it clear, he warned us, it will have to be done against a background of opposition and turmoil. The situation is not going to get easier, it's going to get harder, it's going to get tougher. This is what he says in verses 9-13, immediately prior to the statement that the gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed in all the nations. This is how he describes the world situation, particularly in reference to how it affects Christians.

> "Then 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)

So, it's against that background that the total world situation and particularly the growing hostility to Christians that Jesus gives this final sign of the end, this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed in all the world as a witness to all nations. If Christians are sitting back and saying, "When things become easier, when the pressures let up, then we will really give ourselves to proclaiming the kingdom gospel," they're talking

contrary to scripture. The scripture indicates that things are not going to get easier, especially for Christians, they're going to get tougher. But in the face of the opposition Jesus expects us to obey him. When a commanding officer in an Army commands his soldiers to advance in battle, he doesn't do it on the understanding that they'll not be threatened by danger or faced by opposition. That's not ever an issue in an army and it's not an issue in the Lord's army. Our responsibility is obedience, no matter how tough the going may get, no matter how strong the opposition may be.

Personally, I believe that the forces of evil in this world are going to increase steadily in their hatred, in their violence and in their total scope. They're seeking to absorb and engulf everything that is good. And again, as I said earlier, I believe attack is the best defense. We don't sit and wait for things to get better, we don't hope that the devil will let up his pressure, we go out against his pressure with a superior strength and equipment that God gives us for the gospel and we proclaim this gospel of the kingdom to all nations. Personally, I have a great sense of urgency because I see all the forces of evil amassing themselves for one final assault on the church and on everything that represents God and stands for God. I believe that we have to preempt them, we have to move out ahead of them, we have to carry out this task with great urgency. We cannot just simply hope that things will get better. We have to move ahead of the devil, we have to get into places where he's seeking to gain control before he gains control. We have to plan new strategies, new ways of approach. We have not to wait for the standard missionary approach because, believe me, that is passing. It's almost out of date in many countries. We have to be able to find ways to penetrate the barrier, to go through the closed doors, to break through the Iron Curtains and the Bamboo Curtains and the motivation must be our passionate desire to see the Lord return, the Kingdom of heaven established on the earth and to fulfill our task and stand before him arrayed in garments that are complete because we have fulfilled all the righteous acts which he requires of us.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. In my closing talk tomorrow I'll be sharing with you one final practical way in which we should be expressing our longing for Christ's appearing.

Radio Program

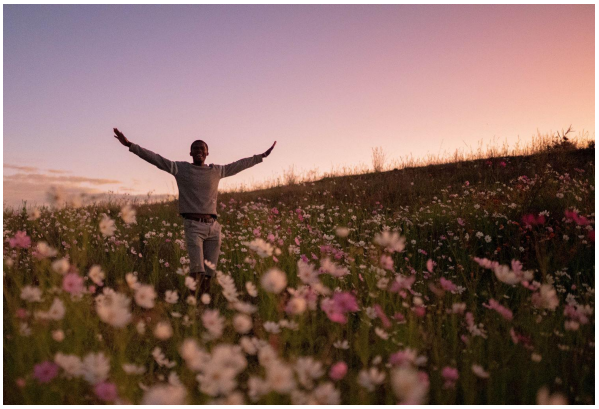
Transcript: TS-R133-104-ENG
Last Updated: 12 Apr 2023
Website: derekprince.com

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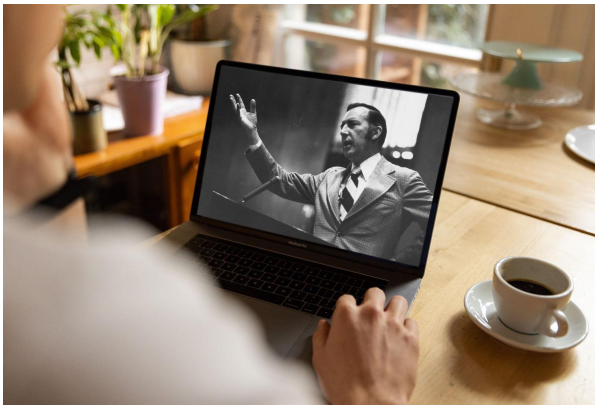
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