

The Sign



The White Horse of the Gospel (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

Verse 11:

> "Then many false prophets will rise up, and deceive many."

It's very difficult to count the number of false prophets that have risen up in this century. But reliable estimates are that at least 10,000 false cults have arisen in the 20th century. And basically, they're arising almost every day somewhere on earth.

And then it says in verse 12:

> "Because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold."

The love of many who? The Greek word is agape, it's the word used primarily for Christian love. We need to be on our guards that we're not infected by the spirit of lawlessness to the point where it kills our love. So these are words of solemn warning for us as Christians.

You see how important it is that we should identify the time in which we're living. Because here are things we have to take into account and guard ourselves against.

And then it says in verse 13:

> "But he who endures to the end shall be saved."

Actually, the Greek says, "He who has endured to the end." When will you be saved? When you have endured. That doesn't mean you're not saved now, but it means to stay saved you're going to have to endure. I think it's important that all of us know that.

As I have meditated on these truths I have become very ready to pray the closing sentences of the Lord's Prayer. "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." I say to myself, "How much could I stand?" And I say, "Lord, you know how much I can stand. Don't take me into a test that's too great for me." I believe that's the meaning of that prayer. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

Now, all that we've been looking at there up till now are birth pangs and they're signs, plural. But they are not the sign. And Jesus was asked what will be the sign. Now, verse 14 is the answer to that question. It's one of the most important verses in the Bible for us at this time. Verse 14 says:

> "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."

When will the end come? After this gospel of the kingdom has been preached in all the world as a witness to all nations. So what is the sign? Not just signs but the sign that the end is at hand? When what? This gospel of the kingdom has been preached in all the world as a witness to all nations.

Now, I'd like to say Matthew 24:14 is the verse that motivates our ministry. I don't think there's a day passes we don't think about it, quote it and check on ourselves. Let me ask you this question. Whose responsibility will it be to preach the gospel of the kingdom to all nations? You can answer in one simple short word. Ours, that's right.

Now you can understand how we can hasten the coming of the day of God. How can we hasten it? By doing the job quickly. By not delaying. By going out, by working, praying, giving, in order that this gospel of the kingdom may be proclaimed in all the world as a witness to all the nations.

Now, if we don't do that when we could do it, we are not hastening the coming of the day but we are delaying the coming of the day. This is a fearful responsibility that rests upon us. Actually, we really have no neutrality. We're either going to be those who hasten it or those who delay it. I personally believe that the coming of the Lord Jesus and the establishment of His kingdom on earth is the only hope for the world. I don't believe that humanity is going to be able to deal with the problems of war and disease and famine with our resources. We've got so many scientific resources today but the fact of the matter is there are more hungry people and more poor people on earth than there have ever been before. If that's how far we've come in 19 centuries, God help the world if it's going to be done by the church. It isn't our business to do that. We have a responsibility always to help the weak, the poor and the suffering but we cannot solve the problems. The only one who can solve it is Jesus by establishing His kingdom. So it's not our business to solve the problem, it's our business to bring the solution which is the coming of the Lord Jesus.

You see, a lot of people today talk about the social gospel. They say we have a responsibility to feed the hungry, clothe the naked. That's perfectly true but it's not the solution. If we're really concerned about the hungry and the naked and the sick, we'll be concerned about the coming of the kingdom of God. Because, that's God's ultimate total solution to that problem.

I personally believe it's unrealistic to think that humanity will solve those problems without the Lord. Some people could say you're a visionary. You believe that the Lord is coming back and He'll establish His kingdom. I do. But, I don't believe that I'm unrealistic. I believe it's unrealistic to think it can happen any other way. I'm convinced the record of history proves me right up to this time. I don't see such a radical change in human selfishness and meanness that it's going to affect a total change of the whole condition of the human race.

Now, we go on a little bit further in Matthew 24 and then I want to give some applications. It's very interesting, there's a tremendous amount of hiatus between verse 14 and verse 15. Verse 14, the focus is on all nations. Verse 15, the focus is on a tiny little part of the earth's surface which is Judea and the city of Jerusalem. I can't go into this in great detail, I'll just read it.

> "Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads let him understand)..."

As I understand it, in that context "the holy place" must be the temple area in Jerusalem. There is no other place that would correspond to that description. So we're now talking about Jerusalem. Not about London or New York or even Singapore, but about Jerusalem.

> "...then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains..."

Now we're talking about Judea. You know where Judea is. It's not called the West Bank, it's called Judea, which is the biblical name for it. We're talking about a very tiny little area of the earth's surface at the east end of the Mediterranean, and that's the ultimate focus of God's dealings with humanity in this age. That's why it's a scene of continual conflict and uproar. Because, all the spiritual forces of good and evil are ultimately going to find their final expression in that one tiny little part.

Then Jesus says:

> "...then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains..."

When this particular sign occurs in Jerusalem. Now, it could be many things. I personally believe it will be something that the antichrist will place in the temple area claiming worship. And at that point the Jews are going to be confronted with a fearful crisis. Are they going to worship a man, which is contrary to their whole background, or are they going to endure the persecution which will come if they refuse to worship? And is this going to lead them to recognize the true Messiah whom up till now they have not recognized? Here God is dealing with the Jewish people. I have to say—I'm not Jewish, my wife is—but I think God is the only one who can deal with the Jewish people.

Then Jesus says in verse 17:

> "...let him who is in the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house..."

This is tremendous urgency because in that part of the world the houses have flat roofs and very often there's an outside staircase up to the roof that doesn't go through the house. So Jesus says if this thing happens and you have to flee and you're on the roof, don't come down into the house, just come down the outside staircase and take off. There's hardly any way He could be more urgent.

Then He says:

> "...let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes."

All right. You're out in the field working, this happens. Don't go back to get your coat, it'll be too late. You've got to take off immediately.

Then He says:

> "But woe to those who are pregnant and those with nursing babies in those days!"

It's going to be very tough for everybody but particularly for pregnant women and nursing mothers.

And then He says something very significant. He says:

> "Pray that your flight may not be in winter, or on the Sabbath..."

A lot of us would say we'll pray that we won't have to flee. But that's not scriptural. Jesus says you're going to have to flee. The only thing you can pray about is the time of year and the day in which you're going to flee. I think this is a tremendously important principle because I think the prophetic Scripture sets limits to what we can pray about. If God has said something is going to happen, it's going to happen. It's futile to pray that it won't happen. But within the limits that God has set we can pray for the thing to happen the way that will be best.

Now, why did He say pray that your flight may not be on the Sabbath? Let me give you my personal background. See, I was living in that country when it was still under the British mandate, when the British were governing. It wouldn't have made any difference if you fled on a Saturday or any day of the week. But since the Jewish state has been set up the Jews have insisted on the religious observance of the Sabbath. Consequently, people don't travel—at least in the Jerusalem area—on the Sabbath. And any large group of people suddenly moving on the Sabbath would become extremely conspicuous. So Jesus says pray it won't happen on the Sabbath.

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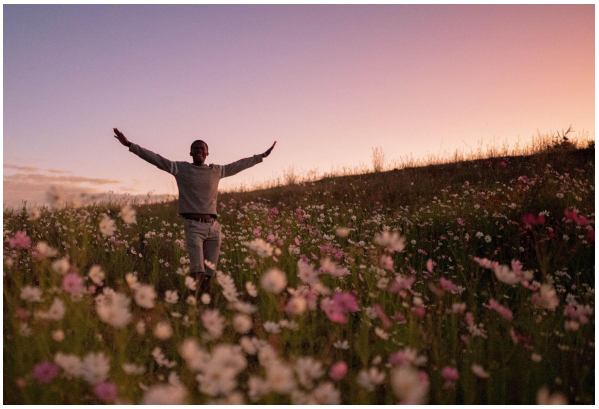

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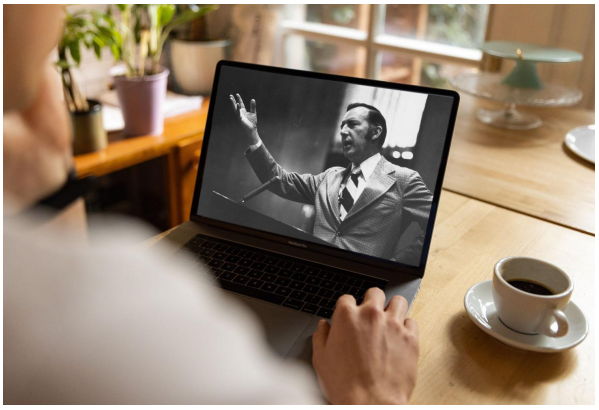

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