

At the End of Time - Part 1

by Derek Prince

Derek Prince's sermon explores the significance of eternity and the role of prophecy in guiding Christians through the challenges of life.

Duration: 28:15

Scripture: Isaiah 60:1, Matthew 24:7, Luke 21:28, Revelation 22:12

Topics: "End Times", "Eternal Focus"

Description

This sermon delves into the themes of the end of time, eternity, and the importance of focusing on the eternal realm rather than just temporal matters. It emphasizes the contrast between righteousness and wickedness increasing, the need for biblical prophecy understanding, and the significance of enduring in faith amidst the challenges of the age. The message highlights the promise of God's glory shining in darkness, the coexistence of wheat and tares until the end, and the encouragement to look forward to the return of Jesus amidst global turmoil.

Transcript

Now we have two remaining doctrines, very exciting ones. The resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. But before I do those, I plan to do them in the next two sessions, I want to do this one on a theme that I've called at the end of time.

Because you have to understand that when we come to these final two doctrines, they take us out of time and into eternity. And that is one of their important functions, that we should not focus only on this life. I find so many Christians today only think in terms of what God will do for them in this life.

But that's just a tiny fraction of all that God has for us. I want to read a scripture from Revelation chapter 10. I have to be very careful, because with my background in philosophy, I can sometimes get taken over by certain thoughts.

This speaks in Revelation 10 verses 5 and 6, of an angel who lifted up his hand and swore by him who lives forever and ever, that's God. Who created heaven and the things that are in it. The earth and the things that are in it.

The sea and the things that are in it. There should be time no longer. Now all your versions will say there should be no more delay.

Which may be the correct meaning. But what the scripture actually says is, there shall be no more time. And we are coming to a point, sooner or later in every one of our lives, when there will be no more time.

Somebody has said the clock behind all clocks is the human heart. And when the human heart stops to beat, ceases to beat, all clocks cease to tick. And each of us individually passes out of time into a new realm, an eternal realm.

And remember eternity is not just a very long period of time. It's a total different realm of being. One that we can scarcely understand.

And I really appreciate the statement, the mystery that God has created. Because time is a mystery. But bear in mind, one day we're going to pass out of time into eternity.

2 Corinthians chapter 4, verses 17 and 18, speak about the difference between the eternal and the temporary. 2 Corinthians 4, verses 17 and 18, Paul says for our light affliction, which is but for a moment. And when you think of all that Paul went through, when he speaks about a light affliction.

My dear brother and sister, what are you worrying about? What have you got to compare with that? Don't tell us about your deep afflictions, till you've measured yourself by Paul. Or, don't let me speak about my afflictions. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment.

It's working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Always bear that in mind when you're under pressure. It's doing something for you.

It's working for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Now in the Hebrew language, the word for weight and the word for glory are essentially the same. So Paul is thinking as a Jew in Hebrew, he's speaking about a weight of glory, which God is preparing for us.

And then he says, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. Now bear that in mind, affliction only works good in your life, while you keep your eyes on the eternal. If you take your eyes off the eternal, and just focus on your problems, and start to feel sorry for yourself, your affliction is not doing you any good.

It only works for you, for us, while we look, not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. So Paul puts before us two different realms.

The realm of what is visible, what is physical and material, and what is temporary. The realm of what is invisible, what is spiritual, and what is eternal. And remember everything that we encounter in this life, in the stream of time, is temporary.

And we are headed for something that's eternal. Very important to bear that in mind. I read just recently, in a little devotional book that Ruth and I share, a very simple statement.

It said, we live in a fallen world. And I said to myself, that is true. And if we are objectively honest, in the world as we know it today, there's much more misery than there is happiness.

There's much more strife than there is peace. There's much more sickness than there is health. Don't let's be painting a pity picture of the world, because it's not like that.

We live in a fallen world. A world that has been marred through and through, corrupted, tainted by sin. And that's where we are.

And thank God our final destiny is not in this world. Paul said something which has really impacted me. In first Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 19.

I've thought about so many of the Christians I meet. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most to be pitied. Ponder that for a moment.

If all you're expecting from Christ is in this life, you are of all the most pitiable. And yet I meet so many Christians who seem to be totally preoccupied with what happens in this life. And their concept of Christianity is getting something from God in this world, that is absolutely alien to the picture of the New Testament.

And so it is very, very healthy for us to be pressured by the Holy Spirit into considering the end of time and the beginning of eternity in the life of each one of us. In Hebrews 13 verse 14 the writer says we have no continuing city here. But we look for the one which is to come.

Now is that true of you? Where is your permanent life? Is it in this world? Or do you realize that this is only temporary? Where just as they say passing through, our permanent destination is in eternity. If you only can see the things of time and eternity, you will be an unhappy person. You'll be a frustrated person.

You'll be always complaining things aren't going the way I want. God isn't answering my prayers. The reason is you have the wrong perspective.

You have to look from the point of view of eternity. I've come to this conclusion that God will not sacrifice the tiniest portion of eternity for the greatest length of time. Because time is not permanent, eternity is.

And I would ask you, how much are you building in your own life for eternity? Scripture says that God has given us, through wisdom, in the book of Proverbs, enduring riches. I've spent a lot of time saying to myself, what are enduring riches? They're not money in a bank. They're not stocks and shares.

They're not the fancy car we drive, or the home we live in, or the swimming pool. None of those are enduring riches. What are enduring riches? Jesus said, sell what you have and give to the poor and you'll have treasure in heaven.

That's enduring riches. Jesus said, whatever you give to the cause of the gospel, God will give back a hundredfold in eternity. That's ten thousand percent.

How many businessmen would turn down the opportunity of ten thousand percent? And then one more thing, which to me is very important. Our gifts will cease when life ends. All our spiritual gifts, our prophecy, our miracles, our words of knowledge, they'll come to an end.

We will not take them with us. They're only for this world, only for time. But one thing we will take with us, you know what that is? Our character.

Character is permanent. And what we are in our character will determine what we will be throughout eternity. That's lasting, enduring riches.

The building of a pure, strong, godly, Christian character. All right now we've got to come back to this theme. I next want to point out to you that it's very important that we have a basic understanding of biblical prophecy.

Unfortunately, so many people have been turned off by false, flashy, shallow interpretations of prophecy. And they've really lost confidence. Well don't let that happen to you.

Don't let the misuse of something good turn you away from something good. For instance, in my lifetime, which has been quite lengthy, I've seen all the gifts of the Spirit misused, at one time or another. But that has not caused me to despise the gifts of the Spirit.

It's just made me more careful as to how I use them. The same is true of biblical prophecy. We need it.

Without it, I'll show you, we're stumbling in the dark. But we need to be careful how we apply it. Now I'm going to turn to 2nd Peter chapter 1, verse 19, 20, 21.

We also have the prophetic word made more sure. The prophetic word is the prophecies of the Bible, the written prophecies. Not talking about the gift of prophesying now, although that's got its place in our lives.

But I'm talking about the written prophecies of Bible. The written word made more sure. Which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place.

Notice that. You cannot afford to despise the prophetic scriptures. Because Peter says you do well to give heed, to pay attention to them.

Because they're a light shining in a dark place. The world in which we live today is undoubtedly a dark place. Furthermore, it's getting darker.

We need a light that will guide us through the darkness. The light that's God provided, is the prophetic revelation of Scripture. Now you can be wonderfully saved and a good Christian, but be walking in the dark.

Because you haven't used and availed yourself of the light of prophecy. If you walk in the dark you'll stumble over things you didn't run into. And you won't really know where you're going.

You won't really understand what's happening all around you. That's through failure to apprehend the truth of the prophetic word. It is extremely important.

And then Peter says we need to give heed to it until the day dawns. And the morning star rises in your hearts. That's not the coming of Jesus.

This is an inner, subjective, personal experience. Where the morning star that immediately precedes the rise of the sun, shines in our hearts. And you know what it does? It tells us Jesus is coming back.

And we get excited. Dear brother and sister, if you've never been excited about the return of the Lord. It hasn't meant much to you.

It's the only hope for humanity. Nothing else can ever meet all the desperate needs of the human race. People talk about this as pie in the sky.

I don't believe it. I believe it's totally realistic. In fact I believe it's utterly unrealistic to expect politicians to solve the problems of humanity.

They've been trying a long time and it seems to me the mess is worse than it used to be. I think it's unrealistic to expect a human solution to the problems of humanity. That is the teaching of humanism.

That humanism is an anti-christian force. Which is at work in most world governments today. So we need prophecy, all right.

Have I convinced you of that? And Peter goes on to say it doesn't originate with men but it comes from God. Now let me quickly give you two keys to understanding biblical prophecy. Problem with me in this is if I get into it I find it hard to get out of it.

But in Deuteronomy 29 verse 29 Moses said to the children of Israel. The secret things belong to the Lord our God. But those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever.

That we may do all the words of this law. So Moses said there are two kinds of things. The secret things, the things that are revealed.

He says the secret things belong to God nobody can understand them. The things that are revealed are for us to act on. Now I think the main reason why people mess up the study of prophecy.

Is they're trying to understand the secret things. And at the same time they're not obeying the things that are revealed. When I speak on prophecy, almost always somebody comes up to me afterwards and says pre, mid or post.

You know what that means? Pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, post. You know what I answer? I don't know. And I'm not ashamed.

Furthermore, I don't believe anybody knows. I don't believe even Jesus knows. Because it says of that day and that hour no one knows.

Not even the Son, only the Father. So if I don't know something that Jesus doesn't know, it doesn't embarrass me, you see. The problem is people wanting to know things that can't be known.

And you know what the motivation behind that is? Pride. That's the most dangerous of all motivations. If we have revealed truth and obey it, God will give us more.

If we don't obey it, he won't give us any more. You say God will please show me next. He says you haven't acted on what I've already shown you.

Why should I show you any more? So that's the key to the effective use of biblical prophecy. Get to know the things that God wants us to understand. And don't bother God about the things that he doesn't want us to understand.

And secondly, whatever God reveals to you, obey it, act on it. In my opinion one clear revelation of biblical prophecy is contained in Matthew 24 14. This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations and then the end will come.

So when will the end come? When this gospel of the kingdom has been preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations. Whose job is that? Ours. I'm glad you said that.

Now if we're not working on that, if we're not obeying that revelation, why should God tell us any more? But you begin to work on that revelation. You begin to devote yourself, in whatever way is appropriate, to getting the gospel of the kingdom out to all nations. You'd be surprised what God will show you next.

But if you haven't acted on that, why should he show you any more? He won't. Now we're going to come back to a picture of the close of this age. I'm going to make certain general statements about what the kind of things that will be going on as this age comes to a close.

I believe we're very near the close of the age. That's my personal opinion. I don't want to set dates.

But I could believe that within the next 50 years, everything that's written in the book will have happened. I'm not saying it will, I'm saying I could believe it could. Now I want to take certain features of the close of the age.

I'll give you three significant scriptures. Isaiah chapter 60, verses 1 and 2. Isaiah 60. What I want to say is, as the age comes to a close, righteousness and wickedness will both be on the increase.

Righteousness will flourish and so will wickedness. Light will shine and there will be great darkness. We've got to get adjusted to this antithesis between these two things of light and darkness.

Righteousness and wickedness. Now in Isaiah 60 verses 1 and 2 and 3. The Lord is speaking to his people and he says, Arise, shine for your life has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples.

But the Lord will arise over you and his glory will be seen upon you. The nations shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your rising. That's a promise for God's people at the close of the age.

The glory of God will shine upon us. And in the midst of the dense darkness that is surrounding us on all sides, that is covering all nations. Those who have a heart for truth will come out of the darkness to the people of God to seek the light.

But don't expect the darkness to end. It will continue and it will grow deeper. But the light will get brighter.

And there's one wonderful fact about light and darkness. Which goes right back to the creation. Wherever light meets darkness, who wins? Right, that's right.

Just bear that in mind. We win, if we're the light. Then the parable of the wheat and the tares.

I won't go into that reading from it because time is running out. But the parable is about a farmer who sowed good seed in his field. And then in the night an enemy came and sowed tares, wheat, weeds.

That apparently looked like wheat but there's just one thing, they don't have any fruit. They don't produce anything that's worth having. And the workers in the field said, well shall we go and pull up the tares.

And the farmer said no, because when you try to pull up the tares you may pull up some of the wheat. Let them both grow together to harvest. And then in interpreting the Scripture, Jesus says the harvest is the end of the age.

He says at the end of the age the angels will come forth and sever the wicked from among the righteous. The wicked will be bound up in bundles and cast into the fire. The righteous will shine as sons in the kingdom of their father.

But bear in mind that right up to the close of the age, the wheat and the tares will be growing up side by side. And that's not speaking about the pagan world. This is speaking about professing Christendom, because that's what it's talking about.

In that situation both wheat and tares will grow side by side. And if you want to be sure you're wheat and not tares, check on the fruit that you're producing. Because that's the difference.

The church is not going to be fully purified until the end of the age. And then we're not going to do it. I'm glad I don't have to do it.

The angels are going to do that. And then in Revelation 22, right near the end of the Scripture, a word from Jesus himself. Revelation 22 verses 10 11 and 12.

He, the angel that brought the revelation, said to me, Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. He who is unrighteous, let him be unrighteous still. He who is filthy, let him be filthy still.

He who is righteous, let him be righteous still. He who is holy, let him be holy still. That's a remarkable statement, since it comes from God.

God is saying in effect, if you want to be unrighteous, go on. You don't have long, live it up. If you want to be filthy, be still more filthy.

But if you're righteous, be still more righteous. If you're holy, be still more holy. Because this is the parting of the ways.

And then Jesus says in the next breath, Behold I'm coming quickly. My reward is with me, to give it to everyone according to his work. So this is immediately before the return of the Lord.

The wicked and the righteous side by side. The wicked getting more wicked, the righteous getting more righteous. And let me say, in the spiritual life there is no standing still.

You cannot remain static. You have to be going either forward or backward. The book of Proverbs says the pathway of the righteous is like the shining light.

Which shines more and more unto the perfect day. Righteousness is not a standstill. It's a pathway.

It's something you move in. And if you're moving in that way, the light is getting brighter, every day. If you're living today by yesterday's light, you're beginning to be a backslider.

You're not in the pathway of righteousness. All right, so those are two things. Then in the midst of all this, Jesus offers us some beautiful words of comfort.

In Luke 21 verses 25 through 28. Luke 21 25 through 28, speaking about the close of the age. There will be signs in the sun, in the moon and the stars.

On the earth distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring. Men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth. For the powers of heaven will be shaken, the whole globe is going to be shaken.

Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory. That's the coming of Jesus. Now this is what he says, now he's speaking to his disciples.

When these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads. Because your redemption is drawing near. So how do you react to all the turmoil and the conflict? Do you get depressed and discouraged? Or do you say, praise God, our redemption is very near.

You see, your reaction tells you where your heart is. Jesus spoke about birth pangs of a new age. He described them in Matthew 24.

We may look there a little later. And they're very unpleasant. But I've never given birth to a baby, but I understand it's never an easy experience.

Birth pangs are associated with it. The question is, do you want the baby? If you want the baby, who put up with the birth pangs? No birth pangs, no baby. So again, you can check your own attitude by how you respond.

If you say things are getting worse and worse, oh this is so depressing, I feel so miserable, where is God, I don't see him doing anything. You're rejecting the birth pangs. What it really means is you're not waiting for the baby.

What is the baby? It's the birth of the kingdom of God on earth. It won't come without birth pangs. The birth pangs are guaranteed.

What we have to determine is how we will respond to them. Meanwhile as I've said, in all of this, the church has a task to complete. And what is that? I didn't hear you.

Proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom to all nations. Let's look at the picture of the birth pangs. In Matthew 24 beginning verse 7. For nation will rise against nation, that's ethnos against ethnos, ethnic conflict.

Kingdom against kingdom, there will be famines, pestilences and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pangs, you see. So you want the baby, you have to endure the birth pangs, there's no alternative.

And then Jesus says, and there's a series of then's. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you. And you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.

Who's you? I didn't hear you. That's right, you is us. That's not good grammar, but it's the truth.

They will deliver you, is you and me, Christians. We will be hated by all nations for the sake of Jesus' name. Verse 10, then many will be offended and will betray one another and will hate one another.

Many who? Many Christians. The pressure will be too great, they'll give up. To save their own skins, they'll betray their fellow believers.

This has been happening in China, Soviet Union, for a generation or two. And it's not confined there, believe me. Verse 11, then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

And believe me, the world is full of false prophets. And a lot of them are inside the church. We won't go into that, I'll just make that statement for you to ponder on.

And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. Do we see lawlessness increasing in the world today? Yes or no? I don't think anybody would say no. And that's what Jesus said, lawlessness will abound.

And he said, what will be the result? The love of many Christians will grow cold. The word for love there is agape, the word used specifically for Christian love. So under the pressure of the lawlessness in the world, some of us will let our love grow cold.

All right, now the next verse is very significant. Verse 13, but he who endures to the end shall be saved. Actually the Greek is more specific, it says he who has endured to the end shall be saved.

So how do you stay saved? You have to endure, that's right. You're saved now, but to remain saved you have to endure.

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