

Pressures, Tests and Challenges - Part 1

by Derek Prince

Derek Prince emphasizes the importance of faithfulness and watchfulness in preparation for Jesus' return, highlighting the dangers of materialism and the evil servant's mindset.

Duration: 28:17

Scripture: Matthew 24:36, Luke 17:26

Topics: "Second Coming", "Faithfulness"

Description

This sermon delves into the teachings of Jesus regarding His second coming, emphasizing the unknown timing known only to God the Father. It explores the parallels between the days of Noah and Lot, highlighting themes of satanic infiltration, corrupted thought life, sexual perversion, violence, and materialism. The importance of being faithful and watchful, as well as the eternal separation that will occur when Jesus returns, is underscored. The roles of faithful servants in providing spiritual nourishment and the consequences of neglecting the imminent return of Christ are discussed.

Transcript

Derek Prince Ministries, proclaiming the inspired Word of God around the world. Derek Prince is an internationally recognized Bible teacher and author. Through books, audios, videos, and radio broadcasts, Derek seeks to reach the unreached and teach the untaught.

In over 50 years of ministry, Derek has reached over 100 nations in more than 50 languages. And now, Derek Prince. Now without any further introduction, we're going back to where we finished last time.

We don't have time to do any recapitulation. You must do that in your own time if it's necessary. We stopped at Matthew 24, verse 34 and 35.

So we're going on now at Matthew 24, verse 36. Speaking about the day of His coming in glory and power. Jesus says, but of that day and hour, no one knows.

Not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only. And another text, which is followed by the New International Version, says not even the sun. But to confirm that, we'll turn to Mark chapter 13, verse 32.

Which is the parable, the parallel Scripture. Mark 13, 32. Jesus says, but of that day and hour, no one knows.

Neither the angels in heaven, nor the sun, but only the Father. That's a wonderful thought. This is the secret that's only known to one person in the universe.

And that is God the Father. It's God's secret. And it says, no one else knows the day or the hour.

I'll point out to you in a little while, we may know the times and the seasons. But the day and the hour is God's secret. And I have to say, I think it's extremely presumptuous of teachers or prophets or preachers, whoever they are, to claim to know what only God the Father knows.

In my opinion, that's arrogance. And arrogance is one of the sins that's most hateful to God. So, and I also marvel at the number of Christians, quote Bible believing Christians, that can actually be fooled by that kind of prophetic utterance.

And the reason is, they don't know the prophetic Scriptures as they ought to do. So we'll go on now, in the next few verses of Matthew 24, verses 37 through 39. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the son of man be.

For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark and did not know until the flood came and took them all away. So also will the coming of the son of man be. Now there's a parallel passage in Luke chapter 17, which amplifies that a little.

And it will pay us to turn there, Luke 17, verse 26 through 30. Luke 17, 26 through 30. And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the son of man.

They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all. And I want you to notice the reputation of that little word all. In every one of these passages it occurs.

It's the last word. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot. They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built.

But on the day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the son of man is revealed. So Jesus there amplifies a little of what is said in Matthew 24.

And not only as it was in the days of Noah, but also as it was in the days of Lot. And we will not turn there in our Bibles. But the key to understanding that is found in Genesis chapter 6, verses 1 through 12.

And Genesis 19, verses 4 through 5, which describes the situation in the world in the time of Noah. And the situation in the city of Sodom in the time of Lot. And I will briefly outline the main features revealed by Scripture concerning that period.

First of all in the days of Noah, the Scripture reveals four major features. Number one, there was satanic infiltration of the human race by satanic angels who came and cohabited with human women. Satanic infiltration is the key phrase.

And then number two, their whole thought life was corrupted. Every intent of the thoughts of their heart was only evil continually. Number three, there was sexual perversion.

It says all flesh had corrupted its way. That's the Bible's way of saying that the sexual relationships had become abnormal and perverse. And fourth, the earth was filled with violence.

I think perhaps we need to pause and meditate on those four features of the time of Noah. Satanic infiltration, corrupted thought life. And in our day I would say, one of the main instruments that Satan has used to corrupt our thought life is the television.

I'm not preaching against television. I'm just saying it is a main instrument that Satan has used to corrupt the thought life of I suppose billions of people. And most of it initiated in the United States.

That's a fact for which we as American citizens have got to accept responsibility. Our nation has poured forth countless hours of filth and corruption that have really affected most of the world today. Then it says there's sexual perversion.

Today this is a commonplace. I came to realize that there was sexual perversion in the church about 30 years ago. And practiced by Christians who were church members.

Especially the abuse of young boys and girls. But nobody talked about it in those days. And it was a shock to me when I discovered that this was what was going on.

But today it is generally discussed. It is widely declared. And everybody knows it's happening.

Not only amongst the unsaved. But also in the church. Sexual perversion is fashionable.

There are many, many unconverted people who boast of it. There are programs on the television that actually take delight in exposing all the nasty details. Just as it was in the days of Noah.

And then the earth was filled with violence. If there's one feature of Noah's day that is being repeated in our day. It's pervasive violence.

I can remember, I'm old enough to remember when ladies could walk safely in the streets of our main cities. Both in Britain and in the United States. Even at night without fear.

Now there are some of our major cities like New York, Miami where it's not safe even to walk in the daytime. We've come to accept this as a fact. But it is a fact that is comparatively recent.

It was not true. I grew up in Britain between the two world wars. There was virtually no violence at all.

If a thief snatched a lady's handbag, it made the headlines. Today nobody would even turn around to comment on it. We are as it were in a way inured to this.

But we have to see it as a fact of life. The earth is filled with violence. I can remember and I'm sure some of you can.

When you could walk on an airplane without being searched. Do you really, do you believe that such days ever existed? Not now. I don't know whether you, this is not, this is by the way.

But I don't know whether you heard the story of the man who was deeply concerned about the possibility of a bomb on the plane that he was traveling on. So he took the statistics and he discovered that only once in a million times would there be a man with a bomb on a plane. But for two men to be on a plane with a bomb was once in a million times.

So after that he always carried a bomb. I don't think that's the right solution. Now let's turn to the time of Lot.

Lot lived in a city, Sodom, which has given its name to a particular sexual perversion which is now misnamed being gay. I'm sorry that the beautiful word gay has been perverted to that ugly use. I don't call it gay, I call it homosexuality or sodomy.

And the main feature of Sodom was blatant aggressive homosexuality. They didn't just practice it. They were aggressive in the practice of it.

When Lot invited the two angels in, it says all the men from every quarter of the city both young and old came to demand sex with these two newcomers. That's all the men from every area of the city both young and old. The whole city was totally pervaded with that.

Some of God's judgments are what we call exemplary. Like the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah. Like the judgment on Ananias and Sapphira who were hypocrites.

Who claimed they were giving more to the work of God than they were. They perished, died. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed.

But that isn't the way God judges everybody that's guilty of those practices. That's an exemplary judgment to show once and for all what God really thinks about these things. If God judged all who were hypocritical about what they give to the Lord's service our churches would have far fewer members.

But God doesn't do that. He's just declared once and for all this is what he thinks about hypocrisy. Then in both cases, in the case of Noah and in the case of Lot Jesus speaks about another feature.

It's better to read it in Luke 17. He says about the days of Noah in verse 27 they ate, they drank, they married wives they were given in marriage. And then it says in verse 28 likewise as it also was in the days of Lot they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold they planted, they built.

Now, Jesus mentions eight specific activities. Eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage buying and selling, building and planting. So I want to ask you, is there anything intrinsically sinful about any of those activities? The answer is no.

What was the problem? The problem was they were so immersed in those activities that they didn't recognize the days in which they were living. I would sum that problem up in one word, materialism. They were so immersed in the material that they no longer had any understanding or alertness for the spiritual and the eternal.

So, let's call feature number five, materialism. How much materialism is there in our western civilization today? I would say it is virtually inundated with it. And believe me, it is by no means excluded from the church.

I think there are many professing Christians who are in their hearts just as materialistic as the people of the world. Maybe a little less demonstrative about it. They don't show it in their lifestyle.

But they are absorbed with materialism. And Jesus warned us that if we are sucked in, into that pit of materialism, we will not be ready when He comes. We will be in the same category as the people of Noah's day and Lot's day.

And finally, there's a good side to the day of Noah. Let's not forget that. It says, but Noah walked with God.

There was one man out of all those people who had an intimate personal relationship with God. And God could speak to him and tell him how he viewed the situation and the judgment that he was going to bring. And I'd like to read from Hebrews chapter 11 just that one verse about Noah.

Because I believe Noah is a pattern for us as believers, as we live in the world today. Noah and his family were the only survivors. And it seems to me clear that only those people who live like Noah and his family will survive today.

Hebrews 11 verse 7 By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. So there was one man in that whole evil situation that walked with God. He had daily communion with God.

God could speak to him, reveal to him what was coming on the earth and show him the only way of salvation for him and for his family. Let me just very briefly sum up those aspects of the days of Noah and Lot. Number one, satanic infiltration.

Number two, corrupted thought life. Number three, sexual perversion. Number four, violence.

Number five, blatant aggressive homosexuality. Number six, materialism. And number seven, the good thing, one man who walked with God.

Now let's turn back to Matthew 24 and go on from there. And we get to, in verse 40, we get to another then. This is the ninth then in chapter 24.

Then, at this time, two will be in the field. One will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill.

One will be taken and the other left. And elsewhere in Luke it says, there will be two in one bed. One will be taken, the other left.

So here is a sudden, dramatic, eternal separation. Separating the people who are closest to one another. Even the two that share a bed.

The two women that work at the mill. The two men working in the field. When the rapture comes, it will snatch one and leave the other.

Which will you be? Snatched or left? It's important that you decide that issue. Now let's go on there. Verse 43 and 44.

But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour or what watch of the night the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. If he had known what was going to happen, he would have stayed awake. He would have been watchful.

And Jesus says, therefore you also be ready. For the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect him. That's important.

If you think you know, you don't know. Because if you expect him coming at a certain time, that's not the time he's coming at. I just need to emphasize this, because it has grieved me so much that I suppose millions of Christians have fallen for this revelation that Jesus was coming at a certain day or a certain time.

It is totally contrary to the words of Jesus. And if you are a disciple of Jesus, you shouldn't have believed it, if you did. And if God spared you, and didn't visit you in judgment, don't ever believe it again.

You have to be watching. That doesn't mean you have to stay wide awake without sleep. But it means you have to be alert.

You have to be sensitive to what the Holy Spirit is saying. So that he can wake you at any time of the day, day or night. Alertness, I think, is the word that I would use.

In Mark 13, this is so strongly emphasized that it's almost worth reading it. Mark 13, just the last three verses. Mark 13, that's verses 35, 36 and 37.

Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming. In the evening, at midnight, or at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning. Lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.

And what I say to you, I say to all. Watch, stay awake, be alert. Don't be lulled into a carnal slumber by materialism, by sin, or by the deceptions of Satan.

Now, we've reached a decisive point in this discourse. Because we've finished the outline that Jesus has given. And now we're going to deal in this chapter and the next with four different categories of people.

All of whom will be impacted by the coming of the Lord. So we look at each category in order. The first category is contained in Matthew 24, verses 45 through 51.

And it speaks about those whom God or the Lord has set in his household to care for the needs of his people. And specifically to give them the appropriate food at the right time. What kind of person does that indicate? I would turn to 1 Peter chapter 5. I think this is the answer.

1 Peter chapter 5, verses 1 through 4. The elders who are among you, I exhort. I who am a fellow elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed, shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly, nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

So that speaks about those whom the Lord has placed in his flock to oversee it. We have both words used, in and over. The overseers, the pastors, the shepherds, the elders, the apostles, for Peter was an apostle.

And I would say all the ministries, the five ministries, are appointed by Jesus in the flock and over the flock. Let's not emphasize one preposition at the expense of the other. They're not just over, they're also in.

In verse 2 of 1 Peter 5, Peter says, Shepherd the flock of God which is among you. So we're not talking about a superior class of people who live on a different level from the rest of God's people. We're talking about people who live amongst God's people, but yet have a special responsibility over them.

And Peter warns his fellow elders. Because when an apostle becomes resident in a city, he has the position of an elder. Be careful how you handle your responsibility.

Because you're going to have to give an account. Let's go back now to the picture at the end of Matthew 24. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household.

Actually that's not the best translation. Appointed within his household to give them food in due season. Notice the first requirement for such a servant is not successful, but faithful.

I have been a missionary in two areas at different times. And in each place I have recognized that there were missionaries who were there before me. Who labored faithfully and laid down their lives and saw very little obvious fruit.

But I say to myself, God forbid that I should ever think that I'm more successful than they are. Because if they hadn't been there first, the way would not have been prepared for me. So bear in mind, it's not success as the world understands it, that God looks for.

It's faithfulness. Who is that faithful, not successful servant. I don't mean that a Christian will not be successful.

But success is not measured by the world's standards. Success is faithfully accomplishing the task allotted to you by the Lord. And the task here is to give God's people their food in due season.

And that really is a pastoral task. A shepherd's task. I have observed over the years that a true pastor knows exactly what his particular flock needs.

And it may be quite different from what another flock needs at the same time. And when I do go, which is rather rare now, to minister to just a congregation, I always like to inquire of the pastors or the pastoral staff. What do you think your people need particularly? One of the responsibilities of a shepherd is to know where his people are and what they really need.

And that requires sensitivity. And then Jesus tells us the reward of that kind of servant. I say to you that the Lord will make him ruler over all his goods.

Faithfulness in this life leads to promotion in the next life. This is a solemn thought. The way we conduct ourselves in this world will determine what we'll be for eternity.

And there is no substitute for faithfulness. Now we come to the but, the other side of the picture. But if that evil servant says in his heart my master is delaying his coming and begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with the drunkards.

So this is the only alternative. And if you, sometime or other we're going to look at a picture of the judgment seat of Christ which is described in Romans 14 and 2 Corinthians chapter 5. You'll find there are only two categories. Good or evil.

There's nothing in between. We've invented in the church a third category. Well I'm not good but I'm not evil.

In God's view that category doesn't exist. If you're not good, you're evil. A lot of people in our churches today are what I call fence sitters.

They're sitting on the fence. They're not really committed but they don't want to be classed as unbelievers. And my little comment on this is when the Holy Spirit comes to the church one of the first things He does is to electrify the fence.

And that's why some people don't welcome the Holy Spirit. Because they want to stay comfortably seated on the fence. So what's the feature of this evil servant? Well he says my master is delaying his coming.

In other words he's lost the vision of the imminent reality of the Lord's return. That's his basic problem. I've come to this conclusion that in churches where they do not proclaim the coming of the Lord Jesus as a reality the standards of holiness will never be those of the New Testament.

This is an essential truth to produce holiness in God's people. So he says my master has been away a long time. I haven't heard anything about him.

I haven't really been in close touch with him. I can live it up. So he begins to beat his fellow servants.

He becomes domineering. And it is very, very easy for people who occupy the position of pastors to become domineering. To control people.

And it's evil. I've made this personal assessment that God will never put his anointing on something which man seeks to control. For more information visit www.fema.org

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