

You Also Must Be Ready - Part 2

by Derek Prince

Derek Prince emphasizes the urgency of being spiritually prepared and actively involved in evangelism as the return of the Lord approaches.

Duration: 28:20

Scripture: Psalm 45:2-5, Matthew 24:14, Matthew 24:20, Revelation 6:1-8, Revelation 19:7-8

Topics: "Gospel Proclamation", "End Time Preparation"

Description

This sermon delves into the urgency of proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom amidst the challenges and tribulations foretold in Matthew 24. It emphasizes the need for believers to be prepared, actively involved in righteous acts, and committed to fulfilling the collective responsibility of spreading the gospel to all nations. The message stresses the importance of staying ahead of the destructive forces symbolized by the red, black, and pale horses, urging immediate dedication to the white horse representing the victorious gospel.

Transcript

I'm going to give you a brief introduction to quantum mechanics, and then I'm going to commenting on Matthew 24 in an earlier session, I pointed out that in verse 20, speaking about the time when the tribulation is about to begin in Israel, Jesus said, You're going to have to escape. Pray that you will not have to flee in the winter or on a Sabbath day. See, intelligent understanding of prophetic Scriptures sets limits to our prayers.

Jesus didn't say pray you won't have to flee, He said you're going to have to flee. But what you can pray is that you won't have to flee in the cold weather or on the Sabbath. And I explained why it would be very difficult for people to flee on the Sabbath in a Jewish state where the Sabbath is a day that's set apart.

So I believe here, it's no good praying these things will not happen, because the Lord says they will. If you're going to pray, God, don't let all these terrible things come on the earth, you're wasting your breath, as I understand it. But what you can pray is that you'll be counted worthy to escape.

And if you're not praying, I doubt whether you will be counted worthy, because Jesus said you have to pray to be counted worthy. Is that clear? Have I communicated that? Well that's important, isn't it? Now I don't want to give the impression of legalism. I don't believe it's done by rules.

I believe it's done by the Holy Spirit. Now, we'll turn to Revelation 19, which we looked at before very briefly. It's a picture of the bride, and I want to point out one feature of that picture.

Revelation 19, verses 7 and 8. This is the triumphant shout of all the inhabitants of heaven. They're rejoicing over the marriage of the Lamb, the Lord Jesus. And the fact that His wife, the bride, the church, has made herself ready.

And let me point out again, she's not making herself ready at this time. She has made herself ready. This is what it says.

Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory. For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And then it explains how she has made herself ready.

And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright. And this is interpreted, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. So to qualify to be there, the bride has to have the right garment.

Which is made of linen, which is always a type of righteousness in the Bible. And it's very pure and it's shining. And then John reveals, the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

You see, when you and I believe in Jesus and accept Him as our Savior, His righteousness is imputed to us. And we are reckoned righteous with His righteousness. That's wonderful, but it's not the end.

Because we have to move from imputed righteousness to outworked righteousness. And here the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. To me, it's always very vivid, I think of every righteous act we perform as one thread in that linen garment.

And then I ask myself, am I going to have enough to be decently covered? It sounds comical but it's very real to me. Will the bride have enough for a beautiful wedding garment? And basically, women don't like to be stingy with their bridal garments, do they? I mean, if there's one time a woman likes to splurge, that's it. So in order to be ready we have to have fulfilled our righteous acts.

Now I believe God has righteous acts individually appointed for every one of us. God has specific tasks for each of us to perform. But I believe also there are certain responsibilities which are ours collectively, for which we are all jointly answerable.

And to me personally, the most important righteous act for which the church is collectively responsible is Matthew 24, 14. Are you beginning to remember what that verse says? This gospel of the kingdom shall be proclaimed in all the world as a witness to all the nations and then the end shall come. I believe it's the responsibility of the church collectively to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom in all the world.

I don't believe any Christian who's committed to the Lord is exempted from that responsibility. It doesn't mean we all have to be preachers or we all have to be missionaries or we all have to be ministers. But I believe every one of us in some way is accountable to God for what we do in that connection.

Because this, as I said, is the sign. It's the one sure indication that the coming of the Lord is at hand. When this gospel of the kingdom has been preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, then the end shall come.

Now because Jesus said it will be proclaimed, I believe it will be proclaimed. I don't believe He was ever wrong. So it's not really so much us to decide whether it will be proclaimed.

What we have to decide is how will I be involved in its being proclaimed. And according to my understanding there's not one Christian anywhere that can be totally exempted from the responsibility. To think just about one thing, finance.

It costs a lot financially. Let's be realistic. I have a radio program that is doing this in many areas of the earth.

In communist China, in four languages. In the Soviet Union, in Russian. In South and Central America, in Spanish.

And our present new tremendous task is to present it to the whole Arabic speaking Muslim world in the Middle East and North Africa. Which is by far the largest unreached major section of the human race. Of the forty most unreached nations, fifty-one percent are Muslim nations.

Now I'm telling you this, I'm not going to make an appeal for money. But let me say that to be on the station that will really reach the Middle East, fifteen minutes costs five hundred American dollars. That's approximately two thousand five hundred dollars a month.

I'm not asking for anybody's money. But I'm just pointing out money is important. Is that right? What we do with our money is important.

According to people who've researched this, the church in the United States at the present time spends ninety-nine percent of its income on itself. And one percent goes to reaching the unreached. That's a scandal.

That cannot be a church that will be ready for the Lord when He comes. That cannot be a bride that has her garments in order. Am I talking about something that's real? I know when I talk about money sometimes people become strangely silent.

Let me reassure you we're not planning to take up an offering. You can relax. But I'm just asking, are you really committed to the task? Somebody says in America put your money where your mouth is.

Money is not the only thing, prayer. I think Ruth would agree with me there are times in our ministry basically we're usually out on the front lines. We don't choose this but basically we are nearly always attacking some stronghold of Satan.

It's not our choice. It's just that it's our lot. I mean I don't want to go into details.

But many, many times the pressure is so intense against us that Ruth cries out, God put our names on the lips of some intercessor. And we realize that unless we have intercession behind us we'll not get the job done. So I'm not talking just about money.

Even more important than money is intercessory prayer. But basically when you pray for something you can't pray for it in a detached way. You can't just say a prayer and forget it.

You'll be involved one way or another, whatever way it may be. Now let me just look at two different ways this responsibility affects us. I've talked essentially about evangelistic outreach.

But I also recognize the tremendous importance, and seriousness, and pressures of the pastoral ministry. I'm not really called to be a pastor. I have been a pastor, I understand what it's like.

I personally feel there is no harder ministry on earth than the pastoral ministry. And, again, Jesus speaks, I believe, about this in Matthew 24. Immediately after He says, in verse 44, Be ready, He gives this little parable.

And I understand this as a picture of the pastoral ministry. The ministry that feeds, and shepherds, and cares for God's people. And often it's not a very dramatic ministry.

Often it involves a lot of hard slogging, and not very much appreciation. But this is what Jesus says, Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season. That I understand is really the pastoral ministry.

Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you, that He will make him ruler over all his goods. Brothers and sisters, if you are in any way involved in the pastoral ministry, remember if you're faithful, you're going to get a position of tremendous responsibility in eternity.

If you wisely and faithfully administer what's committed to you now, God is going to make you ruler over all His possessions. But, there's another side to it. But if that evil servant says in his heart, My master is delaying his coming.

You see, if you study all the people in these passages that are not ready, don't fulfill the conditions, you'll find every one of them says something about delay. In other words, he's not really coming, or he's not coming soon. And every one who speaks about delay has a wrong attitude and is not prepared when it comes.

He says, My master is delaying his coming and begins to beat his fellow servants into eat and drink with the drunkards. The master of that servant will come in a day when he is not looking for him, and in an hour that he's not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him as portioned with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Do you remember what I said about weeping and gnashing of teeth? It's always the people that have been right in it, but never committed themselves to it. I can't really picture this exactly, but it's like, so close all this time and yet I missed it. I can't bear to think of it.

So there's a picture of two servants. One is faithful and one is self-indulgent. He gives up his personal discipline and he just exploits his position and becomes a kind of dictator.

Each of us has got to determine what we're going to be. And then we come to my final thought. We've already mentioned Matthew 24.14. Let's look at that again for just a moment, because I want to point out to you the preceding verses which begin really at Matthew 24, verse 9. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.

I asked you last time, who's you? You is us, that's right. And then many will be offended, betray one another and hate one another. Many who? Many Christians.

Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many, and because lawlessness will abound the love of many will grow cold. And it's in that context that the Lord says this gospel of the kingdom shall be proclaimed. In other words, it's not going to be easy.

The pressures are going to increase, but in face of the increasing pressures those who are committed to the Lord will move out and get the job done. So don't sit back and say if I wait another ten years it'll be easier. It won't.

It'll be harder. It is not getting any easier. I can assure you that from personal experience.

Some people talk about the problems of young Christians. Somebody should talk about the problem of old Christians. I've been a Christian nearly fifty years.

It is not getting any easier. In many ways the pressures are increasing, the responsibilities are increasing, and we are more and more dependent on the grace and mercy of God. Now I want to give you one closing picture from Revelation chapter 6. He's a bold man who undertakes to interpret Revelation chapter 6. It's the vision of the horseman, etc.

Now I want to say I'm giving you my subjective understanding. And really it doesn't matter altogether whether I'm right in my interpretation. I believe I'm right in my application.

But this is so vivid to me, if I can only make it as vivid to you as it is to me. You probably remember there were four successive horsemen that moved on, as I understand it, across the stage of human history. The first one was a white horse.

And it says the one who sat on him had a bow and a crown was given to him and he went out conquering and to conquer. Now the crown was the laurel wreath that we're talking about. It was the mark of the victor.

And a white horse was what the Roman emperors rode on when they rode in triumph. So, it's a picture of victory and triumph. Now we'll put that in our pending file for a moment and we'll move on to the next three horses.

The next horse was fiery red. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth and that people should kill one another and there was given to him a great sword. This speaks to me very clearly of war.

On a very large scale, and I'm inclined to think included in it is civil war. I won't go into my reasons because it takes a little while, but I'm inclined to think that toward the end of this age most nations will be convulsed by civil war. And there are forces at work in many nations that could cause that to erupt.

There are dissatisfied minorities. There are people who feel they're not getting what they're entitled to. It's true in the United States.

I don't want to go on because it's very sensitive. But I'm inclined to think it's going to erupt in bloodshed on a large scale. That's the fiery red horse.

The next one was the black horse. And the one who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, A quart of wheat for a denarius, three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and the wine.

This black horse to me signifies universal shortage. And everything is rationed. That's the scales.

And a denarius was a standard wage for a working man. So with his day's wage he could get a quart of wheat, which wouldn't do more than maintain him. It would not maintain his family.

In other words, people are going to be living on very short rations. In Ghana, a country that Ruth and I were going back to, the daily wage of a working man is less than the price of a loaf of bread. And the amazing thing is, the Christians of Ghana are some of the most generous that we've ever met anywhere.

We asked them sometimes, How do you manage to give so much? They said, We don't know, we just do it. And somehow we have more than enough. But that's a rather clear picture where a man can't earn enough to buy a loaf of bread.

But it says in the middle of that, don't harm the oil and the wine. What are the oil and the wine? They're the luxury foods. So in the midst of this shortage there are going to be people living very luxuriously.

And if you read the book of Revelation, you'll see a clear picture of tremendous luxury in the midst of poverty. Basically what they say in the world today is the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. And that I think is in line with the Bible.

So there will be wealthy people who in some way or other will hold under the poor and say, Now you look after my vineyard and you look after my olive grove and I'll give you just enough to stay alive. That may not be accurate but that's the picture that comes to me. I think you'll agree we're not far away from it in many nations today.

The fourth seal, the fourth creature, was a pale horse. That word in Greek is untranslatable, it's chloros. From which we get chlorine and other words like that.

And Greek color words are different from ours because grass in Greek is called chloros. But it's basically an unhealthy, pallid, sort of colorless color. And this horse, the rider on him was called Death.

And Hades or hell followed, I suppose, on another horse. It's important to remember that Death and Hades are persons. I believe each of them is a satanic angel charged with the responsibility of that area of Satan's territory which is Death and Hades.

Death takes the physical life, Hades claims the souls. And here they are and they're killing at random a quarter of the earth's population. And it says that it was granted to them to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.

Have you ever noticed that it says to kill with death? Now the modern translations don't say that but it's the correct translation. How do you kill with death? Well, I think Ruth and I have discovered in ministry, there is a spirit of death which is at work in many, many people in many parts of the world. And a spirit of death comes in to kill people who wouldn't normally die.

And there are a whole lot of people in hospitals and other places that die without adequate physical explanation. I think I'd say for Ruth and me we have kind of started a personal war against the spirit of death. If I were to preach on it here tonight, I think you'd be surprised at the response, but I can't do that.

Now, so we've done the three horses, two, three and four, and then after that there's the martyrs under the altar. We'd better look at them. When he opened the fifth seal I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testaments they held.

They cried with a loud voice saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, until you judge and avenge our blood and those who dwell on the earth? They said, Lord, isn't it time you avenged us? And the answer was that they were to wait until their brethren, who should be killed as they were, were completed. In other words, apparently at this period there are going to be multitudes of Christians killed for their faith. I believe that's part of the great tribulation.

Because in Revelation it says those who came out of the great tribulation had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Okay, now that's the background. The next thing that follows is the close of the age.

The visible appearance of Jesus, we won't go into that. Tremendous earthquakes and upheavals. Now let's go back, we only have a few moments left, to the white horse.

This is what thrills me. Now this is the way I see it. The white horse is the gospel riding on victoriously, conquering and to conquer.

There's another picture in Psalm 45 of Jesus as the Messiah, which I believe is the commentary on this white horse. Psalm 45, verses 2 through 5. This is addressed to the Messiah. You are fairer than the sons of men, grace is poured upon your lips, therefore God has blessed you forever.

Gird your sword upon your thigh, O mighty one, with your glory and your majesty. And in your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility and righteousness. This is not the ordinary military conqueror.

His conquest is based on truth, humility and righteousness. And then it goes on to picture his conquests. That I believe is the gospel riding on the white horse going out to all nations.

You see, the essence of what I want to say, this is the crucial thing. The white horse has got to stay ahead of the red horse, the black horse and the pale horse. They're all going to ride out.

But we've got to get to people before the others destroy them. See if I'm right, this creates such a sense of urgency. This is the urgency that I feel in my heart.

I feel I just have to get out with the message of the gospel before these awful other horses swamp humanity. And they're already riding out. They've already started.

And I have this continuing pressure, got to stay ahead of that red horse, that black horse, that pale horse. Because we only have just a fraction of time. I want to suggest to you one thing.

The devil doesn't mind if you decide to commit yourself to the gospel provided you don't do it soon enough. And he'll use any tactic he can to delay you. He won't say no, he'll say later.

This is my burning concern. I see multitudes of Christians who are waiting to commit themselves, and I believe they're going to wait too late. There's very little time left as I understand it.

Everything in the earth today is moving rapidly, more and more and more rapidly. And I want to tell you God is not behind the world. God also is moving with tremendous rapidity.

Would you be committed to the white horse? Will you give your life, if you've never given it, for that white horse? The nations are waiting for that horse. May God help you and me to meet the challenge, understand the time in which we live.

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