

I Will Pour Out My Spirit

by John Piper

John Piper emphasizes the significance of living in the last days and the empowering role of the Holy Spirit for believers amidst challenges.

Duration: 24:19

Scripture: Acts 2:15

Topics: "Book Of Acts"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the purpose of God in Minneapolis and the power with which it is spoken. The speaker emphasizes the need for a band of red hot disciples who will finish the Great Commission at the end of the age. The sermon also mentions the dark verses of war, bloodshed, and natural catastrophes that will occur in the last days. However, amidst the distress and persecution, there will be an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that will empower believers to boldly proclaim the gospel to unreached people groups.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God is available at www.desiringgod.org. Acts chapter 2, beginning in verse 14. But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give ear to my words.

For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel. And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.

Yea, and all my menservants and all my maidservants in those days I will pour out my spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth beneath, blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the day of the Lord comes, the great and manifest day.

And it shall be that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Let me ask you two questions now as we begin. One, what would you answer if someone were to ask you, are you living in the last days? That's question number one.

Are you living in the last days? Question number two, if war were to break out tomorrow in the Middle East and result in extraordinary bloodshed and great worldwide upheaval with many nations being drawn into the fray, would you take that as a sign that what we may anticipate from now until the end is a downward spiral of increasing conflagration, increasing calamities, increasing moral collapse only with no brightness at all in spiritual awaking or spiritual renewal? That's question number two. Now let me take those one at a time and work my way sort of indirectly toward our text. First, I want to answer the first question by quoting some passages of Scripture.

Namely, do we live in the last days? Hebrews chapter one, verse one says, in many and various ways, God spoke of old to the prophets or to our fathers by the prophets. But in these last days, he has spoken to us by a son. First Peter one twenty.

Christ was foreknown before the foundation of the world. But in the last of the times has been made manifest for our sake. First Corinthians ten eleven.

These things happen to them as a warning. They have been written down for our sakes upon whom the end of the ages has come. Now, manifestly, I think from those three passages.

Peter and Paul and the writer to the Hebrews believe they lived in the last days because the last days began with the coming of the son of man, Jesus Christ, into the world. Our text here says the same thing. Acts chapter two, verses 15 to 17.

Peter trying to give an account for all this commotion that's going on as the 120 are praising God in languages that people from all over the world can understand. He says this is not drunkenness. This is prophecy being fulfilled.

These men are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel in the last days. There it is in the last days.

It shall be. God declares that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh. And Peter says this is it, which means we're in it.

We are in them. And so my answer to the first question is, yes, we are in the last days and have been in the last days ever since Jesus came. You remember the phrase, the mystery of the kingdom from last spring as we were working on the kingdom of God, the mystery of the kingdom is this.

This age moving along from the creation of the world toward the end has come to an end. And the kingdom of God has arrived. But to everyone's surprise in the Jewish milieu, the end did not completely come and the kingdom did not completely arrive so that we live in this kind of overlapping age in which the kingdom is here, but it's not completely here.

And the end has come, but hasn't completely come. Now, what we've been really doing all year long is trying to understand what it means to live in a time like that. What does it mean to live in a time when the great powers of the kingdom of God have broken into our age, but have not completely broken in and this evil age with its sin and its guilt and its death and its misery has come to an end, but not completely come to an end.

What does it mean to live in a world like that? That's the goal we've been trying to attain all year long. Now, to get a little more toward an answer, let's pose our second question. If war broke out tomorrow in

the Middle East and it was worse than anybody dreamed in terms of bloodshed and carnage and the kind of weapons used, right up to atomic weapons, and peoples and kingdoms from all over the world were drawn into it, would we draw the conclusion that the end is coming in such a way that things will get darker and darker and bleaker and bleaker and more and more wicked and more and more calamitous so that there is no more brightness to hope for on the horizon for the world or the church? Now, to answer that question, we need to be very sober-minded about what the end of the end, the last of the last days will look like.

2 Timothy 3.3 says, understand this, in the last days there will come times of stress for men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, and so on. 2 Peter 3.3 says, scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own passions and saying, where is the promise of his coming? Jesus himself said in Luke 21.9, when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified for this must first take place, but the end will not be at once. Nation will rise against nation and kingdom will rise against kingdom and there will be great earthquakes in various places, famines and pestilence, and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.

So there's no doubt that at the end of the end, it will be bleak. There will be moral bleakness and social bleakness and national bleakness and nature itself will kick in with great earthquakes and famines and pestilence. But is that all? Is that the way to conceive of the end when you begin to see signs like that happening, that you simply hunker down, become defensive, hope that the time will be short or possibly with one eschatology, hope that you'll be taken out, which I don't believe, but I was informed at the door at the end of the first service that people do, and I know that most of you have probably been taught that, but I haven't taught it for 10 years and don't believe it.

I think it's a dangerous doctrine. I don't believe you will be taken out before the tribulation. That wasn't in the sermon, close parenthesis.

Shall we hunker down? Shall we just get in a nice defense thing under the ground and say Passover quickly? It's all terrible till the end? Or is there more to the story? Well, there is more to the story, a lot more of what the end is going to look like, and I want to show you sort of a roundabout way through Matthew 24 into our text in Acts 2. If you want to turn to Matthew 24 with me, I'm going to look at verses 9 to 14, because I see a remarkable implication in this text for hope in the midst of bleakness, because I do believe the end of the age will be bleak, but in the bleakness I see a wonderful ray of light shining, and I want to be a part of it. I'm going to read verses 9 to 14 of Matthew 24. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, put you to death.

You will be hated by all nations for my namesake. Now note that you will be hated by all nations. There's no escape, nowhere to go anymore.

And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. Even in the church, that's going to happen. Many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.

And because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold. Now watch what comes next, but he who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world as a testimony to all those nations who hate you.

And then the end will come. Now, isn't this remarkable? Because wickedness or lawlessness is multiplied, the love of many is going to grow ice cold, but not everyone, not everyone at the end of the age is going to

apostatize. Not everyone at the end of the age is going to grow cold and drop away from the church when the world turns up the heat of persecution and hatred, which is happening in our own land and will, I believe, increasingly happen.

Not everyone. Verse 14 says right in the face of all those nations who hate you, those four to 12,000 unreached peoples are going to be unreceptive by and large. And yet right in the face of that, the promise uncompromising, infallible from the Lord Jesus lips, this gospel will be preached through the whole world as a testimony that every one of them, then the end will come.

Who in the world is going to take that gospel while the love of many grows cold? Who in the world will have the red hot passion for Jesus Christ to stare the muzzle of the gun right in the face and say, whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. It won't be lukewarm people. It won't be the church as it is in America today.

It will be baptized people. It will be filled people. It will be people clothed with power from on high.

It will be Joel to people. Now, let me show you here and just walk with you the identification of those people in Acts chapter one. We're back at Acts.

Now you can close Matthew 24, Acts chapter one, verse five. Jesus says at the end of his life, just before he's gone, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. And then in verse eight, he defines what he means.

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses to all those nations. That's what it's going to take to get them there. You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

You will be empowered from on high and you will thus by that power reach the nations. And then you get over to chapter two, verse 17, and you're ready to understand the full significance of what happens when the spirit is poured out in the last times. Verse 17.

In the last days, it shall be declares the Lord that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh. This is what Joel meant. There will be an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last days that will enable you to face the gun in the four thousand to twelve thousand unreached people groups and say whoever calls upon the name of the Lord in this culture will be saved.

I'm here to bring you good news. I don't care if it's against the law. I don't care if you throw me in jail.

I don't care if you string me up. I am here red hot for Jesus Christ because he said it's going to be finished before he comes and it will be finished by people who are anointed in the way that this book describes it. God's purpose, therefore, is that he empower his people with extraordinary outpourings of the Holy Spirit to witness to his name in the face of tremendous opposition at the end of the age.

Yes, the love of many is going to grow cold. Even at Bethlehem, there will be a dividing of the people. Yes, there will be apostasy.

Yes, people will simply forsake the faith when the heat is turned up by the world. They'll just go and they'll prove they've been playing games all this time. But in the face of this persecution, in the face of this deadness, in the face of this unbelief, God on his true church is going to pour out his spirit with extraordinary blessing and power because it will take something extraordinary to finish the great commission with the kind of upheaval that's described in Matthew 24 and all nations hating the disciples.

It will take something extraordinary, not business as usual, not even Bethlehem business as usual, but something extraordinary, a passion, a zeal, a love for Jesus that is beyond the ordinary experience. The end of the last days is going to be bleak, but not totally bleak. And the end of the last days is going to be bright, but not totally bright in the midst of great distress and global trauma and bloody persecution.

The Holy Spirit is going to make some not go cold, but burn, burn with passion. And with that passion, they will finish the work. I don't know whether it will be a great revival of numbers, but I know it will be a great revival of passion.

Because you can't finish what he said is going to be finished without passion, without courage, without boldness, without prophetic impulses described in Joel 2. So let's go to Joel for just a few minutes here in closing. Not the book of Joel, I'm sorry. What's quoted from Joel.

Oh, you're so good. You're ready to turn to Joel. Go anywhere in the Bible.

Let's go. I'm talking about Joel 2 that's quoted in verses 17 to 21 here in Acts 2. Joel makes it very plain. Peter quoting him makes it plain.

These are mixed days. You see the mixture, don't you? Verses 17 and 18 are so bright, so bright. And verses 19 and 20 are so dark, so dark.

Now, when Joel got this message from the Lord hundreds of years earlier, he did not get the message about how the pieces fit together. Prophets generally did not see temporal relationships. They saw, well, it was like I lived in Pasadena and on Orange Grove, you look north to Mount Wilson and it's always smoggy in Pasadena.

And so you can just see this mountain. And if you start hiking up towards Mount Wilson, you say, oh, and you get over a first ridge and there's a valley. And then you go up and there's another ridge in a valley.

You couldn't see those ridges from my house on Orange Grove. It just looked like one mountain. That's the way the prophets saw the future.

They described this one mountain of events that are coming, some dark, some glorious. And then we, from our perspective, can begin to sort some of it out. Not all of it, but some of it.

And so Peter says right now, Joel is being fulfilled. Let's just read verses 17 and 18. I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh.

Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Your young men shall see visions. Your old men shall dream dreams.

Yea, on my men servants and my maidservants in those days, I will pour out my spirit and they shall prophesy. Now, what is central to this passage is very clear. The Holy Spirit is going to so grip all kinds of people, old and young, men and women, high class and low class is going to so grip the true church of God that they are going to be granted to see more clearly than they ever seen the glory of Jesus, the purpose of Jesus, so that they just gush over with prophetic speech about who Jesus is and what Jesus wills.

I don't know if you share this hope or not. I have not seen that text come true in the proportion that this text promises it will come true. All flesh, sons and daughters, old and young.

Slaves and free, all prophesying, all being so gripped by the Holy Spirit that that the heavens open as it were. Christ shines with such unmistakable glory and his purposes for the world come so clear to these people that when they speak, it is prophetic speech. It is revelatory speech.

They have seen the king. They know more than they ever knew about the beauty of Christ. They know with more certainty than they've ever known what the purpose for God in Minneapolis is, and they speak it with incredible power.

And I believe that's what it's going to take. That's the band of red hot disciples that's going to finish the Great Commission at the end of the age. But look at the dark verses as well.

Verses 19 and 20, I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth beneath blood. That's war, fire, smoke going up from the ruins. The sun shall be turned into darkness, perhaps with just great smoky, devastating, fiery clouds.

I don't know for sure what's meant here. The moon into blood before the day of the Lord comes and the great and manifest day. So it's clear there will be natural catastrophes.

There will be war and bloodshed. There will be conflagration and devastation. So now my answer to our second question, let me just step back and give it.

If war broke out tomorrow and it proved to be a third world war and nations were drawn in and the bloodshed was just incomparable and weapons began to be used that nobody even knew existed and nuclear weapons were brought out, should our thought be, well, the only thing left to expect now is a downward spiral of increasing moral decay and increasing calamity around the world until Jesus breaks in? And my answer would be no. I believe we ought to expect that when nation rises against nation and kingdom rises against kingdom and all the nations hate the disciples of Jesus Christ, there is yet an infallible promise that is going to come true. This gospel will be preached throughout the whole world as a testimony to all the unreached nations, all the unreached people groups, and then the end will come.

And if you ask me, who in the world, in the American church or the church worldwide, will do that, the answer is those upon whom the Holy Spirit has come and who have been clothed with power. And I want Bethlehem to be among the number. Let's pray.

Almighty God and Father, you alone know the times and the seasons. I would not presume to predict when Jesus will come or when the signs will come together of his coming. We may have hundreds of years yet to live, for all I can be certain of.

But, O Lord God, if the times are now and if the bleakness comes, would you please preserve our hope and would you in these days, even these days now, anoint us, pour out your Spirit upon us, clothe us with power from on high. May your sons and your daughters prophesy. May your old men dream dreams and your young men see visions.

May the low class and the high class prophesy. Lord, release our tongues, I pray, with power that the world may know that Jesus Christ reigns and that anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. And all the people said, Amen.

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