

Ahead of Your Time

by Richard E. Bieber

To be a Christian means being ahead of our time, basing our lives on facts the world can't see, and living in a continuous posture of readiness for the return of Jesus Christ.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 7:29

Topics: "End Times", "Faithfulness"

Description

Richard E. Bieber delivers a sermon emphasizing the importance of being ahead of our time as Christians, just like Copernicus and Jeremiah were in their eras. He highlights the need to hold onto the belief in Jesus Christ's return as King and Lord, even when the world sees it as foolishness. The sermon stresses the challenges of living as believers in a world that may not understand or accept our faith, urging detachment from worldly possessions, investing in heavenly treasures, and maintaining a continuous readiness for Christ's return.

Transcript

There was once a time when everyone knew that the earth was the center of the universe.

"Of course, the earth stands still and the sun keeps flying around it every day."

"Anybody can see this with his own eyes."

Those who had a different idea were laughed right out of town by the scientists. Then, along came this joker Copernicus who insisted that it's the other way around.

"The sun, gentlemen, does not revolve about the earth. The earth revolves around the sun."

The world's top scientists tapped their fingers and looked bored.

"Moreover, gentlemen, the sun does not really rise and set. The earth is turning on its axis, making a complete rotation every 24 hours."

You can just imagine the scorn that was heaped upon Copernicus by the experts - the men who had always known and had been able to prove that the earth, naturally, is the center of the universe.

Today we look back and recognize that there was only one thing wrong with Copernicus when he started out. He was ahead of his time. He knew how things really were even though the world, at first, thought him a fool.

In the 6th Century B.C., the city of Jerusalem believed itself to be divinely charmed.

Jehovah God will protect us from Nebecudnezzar's armies.

Haven't we been promised that our city belongs to God forever?

But there was a prophet in the city those days who caused no end of trouble,

-- he unsettled the people,

-- he told them Jerusalem would be conquered.

"God never promised to protect a bunch of hypocrites like you" said Jeremiah. "How can you expect God to protect you when you blaspheme His name and defy His

holy will? Jerusalem will be conquered."

They didn't exactly appreciate Jeremiah's message,

-- they all--but killed him

-- they wanted to think that Jeremiah was wrong.

As it turned out, Jeremiah was right -- only he was

ahead of his time. He saw what other eyes could not

see and would not believe until destruction came.

For 2000 years there have been people walking this

earth who have known as Copernicus knew about the earth

revolving about the sun, as Jeremiah knew about the

impending destruction of Jerusalem,

-- that God has already judged this world

through the Cross of His Son

-- that God has already made Jesus Christ

Lord over the earth

-- and that soon this Christ will appear

openly as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

And for 2000 years the world has looked upon the people

who have known these things as a bunch of crazy fools.

"You're telling me that the world is going

to end?"

"You're telling me that this Jesus of Nazareth

is going to actually return to rule this earth?"

"Give me my car keys. I'm going out

and get some fresh air."

"You mean to tell me that those plagues in

Revelation are really going to happen?"

And there's really going to be an Armageddon?"

"O, come on!"

"Look, if you want to love your neighbor and turn the other cheek and all that -- lovely. This world can use a little of that. But when you come around proclaiming Jesus Christ as coming back to be King and Lord and Judge here on this earth -- you lose me."

To be a Christian in this world today means that you're going to be a little ahead of your time. It means that you're basing your life on facts that the world just doesn't have -- and can't possibly believe. And so in the eyes of the world you can't be anything else but a crazy fool.

With Copernicus, it was different. The earth was already visibly turning on its axis and revolving around the sun. All he had to do was get them to shut up and listen carefully and he could show them that he was right.

With Jeremiah, on the other hand, it was not so easy. Jeremiah couldn't prove anything until it happened as he said it would. Time had to vindicate him.

Our case is like Jeremiah's:

Time is indeed hurling us toward that moment when everybody will know that Jesus Christ is Lord,
King,
The Son of God.

But we're not there yet. So we're out of step,

out of joint with the world, we're crazy fools.

We know that He's coming back because we have been shown by God, in our experience, that Jesus Christ is already Lord. He is Lord now!

By the power of the Holy Spirit working literal wonders in our midst, we can see it, feel it, we can demonstrate it to faith.

- The blind receive their sight.

- The lame walk.

- Lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear.

- The dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

But can we prove to the world out there that Jesus is Lord? No! To the world we can prove nothing -- we can only preach a gospel which most of them will find foolishness.

So, our problem -- and it's a big problem -- is to keep living in this world,

-- knowing that we're ahead of our time,

-- knowing that we're out of step with other people and not lose our grip on that glorious day that we're waiting for, because

-- the minute you lose your grip on the future

-- the minute you lose your vision of the return

of the Master and His coming Kingdom

you sink back and become a child of darkness yourself.

If you were to go down Toledo Avenue from here to Junction

and knock on every door and take a survey of how many people, at one time or another, gave their lives to Jesus Christ, you'd end up with quite a few.

But, if you were to get an honest answer from these folks as to how many of them are still walking with Christ today, the number would drop to one-half, one-third, or one-tenth.

You would find that the majority of people, who at one time or another, made a commitment to Christ, after a while slipped back to their old life, and that today they are actually more dull of mind and blind of eye than before their conversion took place.

Why? One reason is because most of those who made a commitment to Jesus Christ were never told that to be a Christian is to be ahead of your time. And once they got into it, they couldn't stand the strain.

If doctors delivered babies as hastily and sloppily as some evangelists and preachers bring people to faith in Christ, few babies would live. Some evangelists are almost like sideshow barkers.

"Hurry, hurry, hurry. Step right up and make your decision. Get yourself saved from sin. Tickets 50 cents -- two for a dollar."

Many a poor sucker who steps up and buys his ticket doesn't have the faintest idea what his decision for Christ is really going to cost him.

When you surrender to Jesus Christ, you are not going

through some blubbering emotional catharsis,

-- you are anchoring your life to One whom

this world will never know to be the Lord

until this world has come to its end.

This makes you ahead of your time.

-- You're listening to a Spirit they do not hear.

-- You're going by facts they cannot see.

-- You are different.

And this world knows how to spot people who are different

and it knows how to put pressure on these people to make

them conform.

The virgins in our gospel had just this problem.

-- They were ahead of their time.

-- They took their lamps and went forth to

meet the bridegroom,

-- only there was no bridegroom

-- they waited and waited and no

bridegroom came.

"Are you girls crazy? Waiting here in the

dark to meet the bridegroom at this hour.

Go home and go to bed!"

Now the virgins believed that the bridegroom would

come and so they kept waiting for him and he did come.

But it took the bridegroom so long to get there, that

by the time he arrived only half of the virgins were

still prepared -- only half of them went in.

Our Lord has been most careful to teach us how to live

in this world as people who are ahead of our time -- so we can hold out until He gets here. He has shown us how and if we don't live this way, it's certainly not His fault.

If we're going to survive as people who are ahead of our time, the first thing we have to learn is detachment.

-- Learn to hold yourself in a detached open--handed relationship to everything in this world.

-- Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust corrupt and where thieves break through and steal.

-- Sell what you have and give alms. Don't be like a man on a 50 mile hike who wants to take the kitchen stove and the bathtub along.

The apostle Paul teaches the same thing: detachment.

The time is short --

- from now on let those who have wives live as though they had none,

- those that mourn as though they were not mourning,

- those that rejoice as though they were not rejoicing,

- those that buy as though they had no goods,

- and those that deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it.

In other words, we go on living, buying, selling, working, resting, but with detachment. Making sure that we don't get sucked in and chained down to this age by our houses or lands, or money, or wives, or husbands, or children. This life is a camping trip -- it's not our home.

The second thing we're going to have to learn to do if we're going to survive as people who are ahead of our time: we're going to start doing our banking in Heaven. Prove to yourself that you really believe by banking on the age to come,

-- lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven where neither moth nor rust corrupt and where thieves do not break through and steal, -- provide yourselves with bags which wax not old -- a treasure in the heavens that fails not.

Put your "money" where your mouth is. If you say you believe He's coming back, how come you're sinking your treasure in things that are going to be destroyed?

Where your treasure is, that's where your heart is.

If your treasure's in this world, then your heart's in this world and you're not looking for Him to come back.

My friend, if all your years of toil add up to a pile of securities in your safety deposit box, a pile of money at the local bank -- I say if that's all you have to show for your life -- what do you have?

If years of toil, and prayer, and suffering have won for you a crown of righteousness in the coming Kingdom, you have something.

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my cause, I have kept the faith", says Paul.

"Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give me at that day -- and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

And finally, if we're going to survive as people who are ahead of our time we'll have to learn to live in a continuous posture of readiness.

Let your loins be girt about and your lamps burning and yourselves like men that wait for their Lord when He will return from the wedding. That when He comes and knocks they may open to Him immediately.

The flame in the virgins lamps was a symbol of their readiness and when the flame went out this meant that they were no longer ready.

It's very simple

- if you are living in constant union with the Spirit of Christ,
- if the Christ you are communing with in your heart is really the Son of God and not some false Christ you've set up for

your own twisted purposes,
- if it's really Christ the Son of God
you're walking with, and talking with,
and obeying,
then when the trumpet blast pierces the heavens you
won't be afraid. You will lay down your work, go to
the door, look up at the sky, and you will know that
you're no longer ahead of your time -- your time has
come and that all the waiting and watching, and all
the suffering you endured through the night hours were
more than worth it.

At last the Kingdom of God has come and the children
of God will have their day -- a day which will never
end. Maranatha -- may it be soon.

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