

# Broken Jars ... Blazing Light

by Richard E. Bieber

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*The church must break its jars and let the light shine out through repentance, unity, and service to conquer as an army and set captives free.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:14, Matthew 16:18, 1 John 1:7, 1 John 4:3, Revelation 2:10

**Topics:** "Church Mission", "Spiritual Warfare"

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## Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the true essence of the church as described by Jesus, emphasizing that it is meant to be an army breaking through the gates of death to set captives free, not just a religious institution. He warns about the spirit of the antichrist working within congregations to distract from the mission of the church. Drawing parallels to the story of Gideon, he highlights the importance of repentance, transparency, and unity within the church to conquer the forces of darkness and fulfill its purpose of manifesting God's kingdom with power and victory.

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## Transcript

Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered, "You are Peter the rock and on this Rock I will build my church and the gates of death will not prevail against it."

"I will build my church".....the kind of church Jesus is talking about is very different from the image we picture in our minds. It's not a giant institution with officials busily racing from one "ministry" to another. It's not an assembly of respectable folks lined up in pews going through their usual Sunday routine. Jesus describes his church as an army, battering through the gates of death to deliver death's captives into the joy to the Banquet Table of God.

From its earliest days that's what the church has been. But from its earliest days there has been at work, right inside the church, what the early believers called "the antichrist", a spirit that will one day take human form and become the evil counterpart of the Messiah himself.

This spirit of the antichrist is at work today across the earth. His purpose is to neutralize the army of light; to paralyze it so that instead of setting the captives free, and breaking their chains, the church becomes another institution in downtown Babylon, totally wrapped up in itself, concerned about its survival above all else.

When the antichrist works within a congregation, he attempts to do the same thing. So instead of the congregation having a mission to the world out there, it becomes absorbed with itself -its own needs: Pretty soon we hear the members of the flock asking whether their own private "spiritual needs" are being met, as if this is what "church" is all about.

Strange as it may seem, the more we concern ourselves with our own needs the more needs we have, and, the next thing you know, we're so self-absorbed that those gates of death remain unchallenged, and the captives remain in chains.

In Revelation chapters 2 and 3, there were seven churches which started out as vital armies invading the enemy territory of death and setting the captives free. After a while, five of those seven armies were busy getting comfortable, concerned with their own wellbeing and safety. And so the Lord, through the Spirit, warns them:

This is not a spiritual daycare center. This is a war zone. There is a battle going on. And you either conquer or you will be conquered!

At the end of every one of those seven letters to the churches we read words like this:

He who conquers will have the right to eat of the tree of life.

He who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.

He/she who conquers will eat of the hidden manna.

The same Spirit now speaks to our churches:

"Are you going to be my church?"

"Are you going to go out there and break through the gates of death and set those captives free?"

We answer, "Yes, Lord."

And he says, "Good! You will be my church. And you will set the captives free, and you will manifest my kingdom with a power and victory and fruitfulness such as you have never seen. But you're not quite ready."

And then the Lord reaches out his hand and he shakes us.

And we say, "Lord, what's going on? We just lost five members!"

He says, "Relax, I know what I'm doing." And he reaches out his hand and shakes us again.

"Lord, we just lost ten more. There won't be anyone left around here pretty soon."

And he says, "I know what I'm doing. Trust me. I'm getting you ready. I'm sifting."

We remember the story of Gideon and his army. Israel had turned away from God and had begun to worship idols and live like the pagans around them. So, the Lord allowed the Midianite and the Amalekite armies to come and take over the land.

-- If you had a little bowl of wheat, they'd grab it and run with it.

-- If you had a wife, they'd come to your house and steal her, and you'd never see her again.

Everybody in Israel was demoralized and frightened, and there was not a thing they could do to protect themselves.

When the Israelites finally humbled themselves and cried to God for help, God raised Gideon to be their deliverer. Gideon gathered an army of thirty-two thousand Israelites. But those thirty-two thousand Israelites were nothing compared to that mass of enemy soldiers down there in the valley.

God says to Gideon, "You've got too many in your army: when I give the Midianites into your hands, you'll all think you did it yourselves, so cut down your army. Tell anyone who is afraid and trembling they can go home." So Gideon says, "Any who are scared can go home." Twenty-two thousand pick up and go home.

The Lord says to Gideon, "Your army is still too big. You've got to cut it down some more. Take them all down to the spring and have them drink and watch them. The ones who get down on their knees and get comfortable and slurp up water, put them on one side. The other ones who, won't take the time, they just lap up the water with their hands like animals, put them on the other side." Ninety-seven hundred got comfortable so they can go too. Now there's three hundred left in the army that was once thirty-two thousand.

"With these three hundred, you are going to conquer the Midianites. You will drive the Midianites and the Amalekites out of Israel."

Then, to give him more assurance, the Lord says, "Tonight you are going to do it, but before you do, go down in the dark to the outskirts of the camp of the Midianites and listen to what's going on." So he went down with his servant Purah.

When Gideon came, behold, a man was telling a dream to his comrade; and he said, "Behold, I dreamed a dream; and lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian, and it came to the tent, and struck it so it fell, and turned it upside down, so that the tent lay flat." And his comrade answered, "This is no other than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; into his hand God has given Midian and all the host."

When Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshipped [he worshiped the Lord]; and he returned to the camp of Israel, and said, "Arise; for the Lord has given the host of Midian into your hand." And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and put trumpets into the hands of all of them and empty jars, with torches inside the jars. And he said to them, "Look at me, and do likewise; when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. When I blow my trumpet, and all who are with me, then blow the trumpets on every side of all the camp, and shout, 'For the Lord and for Gideon.'"

So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just set the watch; and they blew the trumpets and smashed the jars that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the jars, holding in their left hands the torches and in their right hands the trumpets to blow; and they cried, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!" They stood every man in his place round about the camp, and all the army ran; they cried out and fled.

If we are agreed that our churches are to be an army of the Lord to set the captives free;

not a club for nice people,

not a middle-class-culture center,

not an institution,

but an army that breaks through those gates of death, and sets the captives free ... we need to open our eyes and see that we are surrounded by a mission field. So what are we waiting for?

Let's rejoice that God has been sifting us down to size.

The Lord God is making us ready to conquer.

And we will conquer, if we do three things:

First, we will conquer if we pull together around our call, which is: "Arise; for the Lord has given the host of Midian into your hand."

Go out there and free those captives!

Secondly, we will conquer if we blow our trumpets together:

Have a unified sound. Have a message that is without uncertainty.

That is clear, definite, and unified.

Preach the gospel....Go make disciples...Manifest the kingdom of God with our lives!

Thirdly, we will conquer if we break our jars and let the light shine out together.

But what does it mean, to break our jars?

The Midianites were down in the valley, and they were quite confident that they were in control, but up on the Mount, we have Gideon and his three hundred, and each man has a jar with a torch inside of it and a trumpet. The jars remain intact until just the right moment, and then suddenly, all the jars break, and the light shines out and terrorizes the Midianite armies.

You could say that each of us here has a jar surrounding our torch--a beautiful jar.

Our jar is our "self"--our brittle, unbending self...

our desire to have everything our way;

to be in control

..."I'll serve God as long as he fits into MY schedule!"

Inside our jar we have a torch--God has given us his Spirit. But what effect will the gift of God's Spirit have on the world out there as long as it's covered with our jar?

All you get as long as the jar covers the torch is smoke.

There will not be light until the jar breaks!

If we are going to win--going to conquer--the jars will have to break.

To break the jars before God means repentance.

To break the jars before each other, means that we walk in the light - we don't hide from each other--we say what's on our hearts.

To break the jars before the Midianite army--before the world--means that we engage in a corporate ministry--a service together to the world out there.

1. For power to flow, it always begins by breaking our jars before God: repenting.

Every fellowship on this earth that is setting the captives free is a place of repentance before God.

We break our jars, and fall on our faces before God and say, "It's me, O Lord, me. Not my brother, not my sister, but it's me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer.... my sin...my attitude...my hardness of heart ... my deceitfulness...my desire to make things go my way. "

Revival begins with repentance.

Revival continues with repentance.

Revival spreads with repentance.

Revival is repentance.

Not the "other guy's" repentance--mine--my sin, my guilt, my attitude.

"Lord God, it's me."

May God help us to break our jars before him as we read these words.

2. The second thing we need to do is break our jars before each other.

Which means to walk in the light.

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness [keep our torch hidden in our jar], we lie and do not live according to the truth; but if we walk in the light [if we break the jar and let the light come out], as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 1 John 1:5-9

As long as our jar is intact it may look nice, but you don't see any light. When the jar breaks, it looks terrible--but now the light can be seen.

"Speak to one another", we are told in Scripture. "Exhort one another." "Encourage one another." Even: "Rebuke one another."

Speak ... communicate ... talk.

To do that involves the breaking of a jar: I've got to break my jar so you can really see what's inside of me.

And you have to break your jar too.

We've got to break our jars.

No fellowship can function as the army of Gideon until they break their jars before each other, and begin to walk in the light before each other as brothers and sisters, opening their hearts to each other.

If it means writing somebody a letter, or if it means picking up the phone, let's start communicating.

If there is anybody that I'm talking uncharitably about then it's time for me to break my jar and talk directly to that person. If I've got a problem, tell them. Don't tell everybody else, tell them.

Let's break our jars. This won't be easy for us. But it will set us free.

3. Thirdly, to break our jars before the world means that we come together in order to serve together. Why else did God put us together?

Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

They cannot give glory to your jar. Your jar is gone. All they're going to see is the light.

We are here to break through the gates of death and set the captives free.

We are here to touch people with the life of God.

What other reason do exist for but for that?

There's a lady living down the way who nobody likes, because all she does is complain.

Break your jar and get to know her.

There are people where we live, and in the places where we work, who are ripe for the kingdom of God, but we will not be able to reach them until we break our jars.

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Let's break our jars before God and repent.

Let's break our jars before each other and begin walking in the light. No masks. No pretence.

And let's break our jars before the world and draw near to the forgotten ones with a word of hope and salvation.

As we break our jars, the light will shine.

And we will conquer.

Lord Jesus, may the earthquake that accompanied your rising from the dead break the apathy and dullness of my soul, that the Transforming Light of your Resurrection Spirit prepare the way for a life of

unwavering faith.

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