

# Dawn Before Darkness

by Richard E. Bieber

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a vision of Jesus' glory, forgiving grace, and sanctifying power to guide us through times of trouble and to endure in the face of adversity.*

**Topics:** "Spiritual Guidance", "Gods Vision"

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## Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the importance of having vision and receiving light from God to guide us through the challenges and darkness of life. He emphasizes how God prepares us for what lies ahead, just as Jesus revealed His glory to Peter, James, and John before facing dark times. The sermon highlights the significance of three visions: the Transfiguration, the Lord's Supper, and Pentecost, as sources of light and preparation for believers. Bieber urges the congregation to seek the vision of God's Son, His forgiving grace, and His sanctifying power to endure and walk as children of God in a world filled with turmoil and uncertainty.

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## Transcript

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain apart. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Eli'jah, talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is well that we are here; if you wish, I will make three booths here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Eli'jah." He was still speaking, when lo, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces, and were filled with awe. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of man is raised from the dead." Matthew 17:1-9 The God who guides us on our journey through this world (if we let Him guide us) knows what's up ahead. He is not only here where we are on the path, but He is also at this moment a million years in the future - so He knows what's coming.

Rarely does God lift the fog, that shrouds our future, to show us what's in store for us ... for we humans have all we can do to handle the present moment without trying to grapple with the problems of tomorrow and the day after. But if we're walking with God, He always prepares us for what is ahead in some way. When we're about to enter into an especially dark night of trouble, before that night closes in, God sends us a torch - a light - so that when the darkness comes we won't stumble.

If He gives you a torch and its daylight, hang on to it; you'll soon need it. If there's a storm brewing, whether it is a storm of persecution, or war, or plague, or some other catastrophe, the Spirit of God passes through the Body of Christ preparing it for whatever shocks lie ahead. This is what Jesus was doing on that day when He took Peter, James, and John on that high mountain apart and allowed them to see a glimpse of His glory - He was giving them light for the darkness that was waiting for them up ahead.

They didn't know why they were caught up into this other dimension and made to see something that they would never see again until they left this world of flesh. They didn't know why, for those few blessed moments, they were permitted to see Jesus of Nazareth as God the Incarnate Word whose face shines as the sun and whose raiment is white as the light ... seeing not with faith but with God-opened eyes that their master was the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. It was a vision and they were going to need it!

For no sooner did they come down from the mountain and start heading south to Jerusalem than terrible things began to happen. Soon Jesus was standing in the Judgment Hall as a criminal, lashed with whips, a crown of thorns on His head making blood run down on His face. They saw Him die. But all the ugly things, the horrible things that happened to their Master were seen against the background of this unforgettable vision. Because of this vision they were preserved even though they lost their courage, their faith.

It took only a look from those eyes and they came to their senses because the transfigured face of the Son of God was burned into their souls. The night before His death, Jesus got all the disciples together in an upper room and opened their eyes as He had already opened the eyes of Peter, James, and John. At the climax of the meal, Jesus took bread and wine, "This is my body given for you. This is my blood shed for your sins. Do this in remembrance of me." He gave them a vision of the meaning of the Crucifixion which was going to shake them to their toes on the very next day.

Eat this meal in remembrance of me, and you'll have light. And every time they ate that meal in remembrance of Him they had light. He was in their midst, - opening their eyes, - showing them the way. God alone knows how many nights of persecution were illumined in advance by believers eating this meal. God alone knows how many men and women have been readied for martyrdom by eating the body and drinking the blood of the Lamb of God. Another time of vision was Pentecost when the believers were in a house in Jerusalem and heard the sound of rushing wind, and saw the tongues of flame, and began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance.

This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel. "And it shall come to pass in the last days", saith the Lord, "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." Joel 2:28 And the prophet Joel goes on to explain that this is to be followed by blood and fire and vapor of smoke. "The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood." Joel 2:31 And so it was: Pentecost signaled not success, or prosperity and happiness for the Christians, but trouble. - Persecution began. - Followers of Jesus were murdered by the hundreds. - Their goods were confiscated. - Their families were broken up.

But in the midst of all the darkness, they had light. To this day, in the Body of Christ, these three apostolic visions coincide: - We celebrate the Transfiguration. - We eat the Lord's Supper of bread and wine. - And we experience our share of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit has been stirring among serious believers with more power in recent days than at any time that I know of. And, as these three visions come together, the Spirit of God says to us: "Come and partake of my light to the full - now - fill your vessel with oil, - drink

deeply of the springs of salvation, for you are going to need every bit of this light to guide you through the approaching storm".

We know that the darkness is coming. One by one we see the cords that have held the nations together snapping. People in high places and low are losing confidence in each other. Things worldwide are out of control. Beyond our shores, wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes and famines continue to spread. What are you going to do? Run away and hide? Where do you plan to run? Turn your home into an arsenal? You can make plans for the storm all you like, but if, when it comes, the only resources you have are the instruments of physical survival - food and ammunition and a gun - you may come through it alive physically, but you may very well lose your soul in the process.

If you let yourself get caught up in the fires of vengeance and hatred, or if you should stumble into that acid pool of despair, or if you should become a man or woman of violence, better that you should have died in the storm than to end up with a warped soul and a twisted mind. We have children, and we hope that they will be kept safe in the coming days. But I would rather that we would all be the victim of some fool's gun than to see our children grow up, learning from this to have malice eating at their hearts, or callous indifference blinding them to their brother's need.

At this hour, much more important than physical safety, is the need for light - for vision. The only useful thing we can do while we see those dark clouds piling up and hear the rumble of thunder in the distance, is to fix our eyes on the light we now have. - Make the most of the vision God is now giving us. - Soak in that vision until it's part of you. But we with open face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into that same image - from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord.

So that when the darkness closes in we may have light to keep us from stumbling into that darkness. This day God is giving us a threefold vision of His Son. First, is the vision of His Lordship. And His face did shine as the sun and His raiment was white as the Light. He's King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Get your eyes on Him and listen to what He has to say. The same God who spoke to Peter, James, and John is speaking to us, telling us that; - no matter what happens, - no matter how bad things get, - no matter how terrifying the works of Satan become, Jesus Christ is still in charge - - He knows exactly what's happening, - knows exactly what He's doing by allowing it to go on, - and He knows where we are.

I feel sorry for the men and women who think they've found freedom by believing God is dead. They may feel free now, but when the earth begins to reel and pitch like a ship in the storm, they're going to cry for a vision of the Lord of Heaven and find none. "Behold, the days come", saith the Lord God, "That I will send a famine in the land. Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea and from north even to the east - they shall run to and fro and seek the Word of the Lord and shall not find it".

Amos 8:11-12 The vision is to be had now. The vision of the glory of God in the face of His Son. Seek that vision until your whole being is filled with the knowledge that this earth and all that is in it, including its devils, is in the strong hands, the perfect hands, the unerring hands of the Son of God. We are being given a second vision of Christ today: The vision of His forgiving grace which comes as we eat His body and blood. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

John 3:17 We see a cross with one who did no sin, dying there for us. As we eat the bread and wine, He says to us, "Remember that I have already atoned for your sins". If we fixed our eyes on that vision of the

Cross, we wouldn't be so quick to judge our sister or brother. How can you judge that person the way you do when you've been forgiven so much? Christians who walk around condemning people left and right have long since lost whatever vision of the Cross they may have had.

They are walking in darkness. And, if we fixed our eyes on that vision of the Cross, we wouldn't try to dominate other people's lives. How can you have the audacity to dominate another person's life when the only good things in your own life are there by the mercy of God. When you take that bread and wine, open your eyes and see what it means. Realize that you're coming for this food because you desperately need it. Forget about your brother's sins, and bring your own sins with you as you come to kneel before the Cross .... that abiding in the vision of God's grace you may live through the coming days without guilt.

And the final vision of Christ we receive is the vision of His present sanctifying power. "John indeed baptized with water, but I'm going to baptize you with the Holy Spirit", (Mark 1:8,) said the Master. We don't have to run with those people who are losing their heads. Nor do we have to join the battle over earthly power. We can have power from above that will keep us wise and strong and clear-headed through the whole conflict, whether we live or die. There is a stream that runs from beneath the Throne of God, and is directed by the hands of Christ across time and space, into the lives of those who call upon His name. And as this stream touches their lives, they begin to become Christ-like. The stream runs through the Body of Christ, and all you have to do is drink.

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let him who hears say, "Come." And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price.

Revelations 22:17

Receive the Holy Spirit by faith and you will have power to walk through this world as a son or daughter of God.

The thing that separates the men from the boys, as far as the Kingdom of God is concerned, is endurance. Can you keep going when things get rough or does your strength give out?

To endure on this road, the one thing you need above all others is vision. Where there is no vision the people perish.

Now is a time of vision. God is giving to His children light to guide them in the coming days ... and His message to us is clear;

Make the most of the vision that I'm giving you now.

Look into the face of my Son while things are still calm.

Listen to Him while the din of war is still muffled.

- This is no time to sit around trying to justify yourself when you know you're guilty.

- This is no time to be feeling sorry for yourself, complaining about what other people are doing to you.

This is the time to open your eyes and see the Son of God as He reveals Himself to every open-eyed man, woman, and child in his Church on earth ... that when the darkness thickens and the storm presses in, you may have light within to guide you on until the storm is over and the glory of His presence burns away all

shadows from this earth.

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