

Interpreting the Present Time

by Richard E. Bieber

Richard E. Bieber's sermon emphasizes the importance of interpreting the present time through a spiritual lens and responding to God's call amidst impending trials and judgment.

Scripture: Matthew 24:3

Topics: "End Times", "Spiritual Discernment"

Description

Richard E. Bieber delivers a powerful sermon urging believers to not only have faith but also to be discerning and aware of the signs of the times. Drawing from Jesus' teachings, he emphasizes the importance of interpreting the present time and being prepared for the challenges ahead. Reflecting on historical events like the destruction of Jerusalem, he highlights the consequences of missing God's visitation. Bieber encourages listeners to make a choice to enter God's world fully or cling to the ways of this world that are destined for ruin.

Transcript

He also said to the multitudes, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, 'A shower is coming'; and so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing you say, 'There will be scorching heat'; and it happens. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky; but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?"

Luke 12:54-56

We are looking at a part of Jesus' message that isn't talked about these days. Not only does Jesus expect us to have faith, he also expects us to think, to wake up and "figure it out."

"You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky; but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?"

"Do you understand what's going on right now in this world?" he says to us. "What's really going on. Not what they tell you on the evening news. Not what the pundits and politicians keep jabbering about. Do you see what God wants you to see? Do you know what to do about it?"

One time, as they were standing on the Temple Mount, the disciples began gushing to Jesus about those magnificent Temple buildings, the pride of Israel. He answered them:

"You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down."

Jesus saw what was coming, and he warned them. He expected his followers to understand what was going on, so they wouldn't be alarmed and fall apart.

And as he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately saying, "Tell us when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?" And Jesus answered them, "Take heed that no one leads you astray, for many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places; all this is but the beginning of the sufferings." Matthew 24:3-8

He was teaching them to figure it out. "Take heed that no one leads you astray." "See that you are not alarmed." Stay focused! He went on to talk about Noah's day. Crazy Noah! While everybody else is eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, Noah is building his boat----on dry land! "And then came the flood and swept them all away."

"You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky; but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?"

What did he mean, "Interpret the present time."? What were they missing? What couldn't they figure out? Two things were happening before their eyes that were going to change the course of history. They were looking right at them and couldn't figure it out.

First, after a spiritual drought of hundreds of years, a prophet appears in Israel. The greatest of them all. "Of men born of woman, there is none greater than John the Baptist."

This prophet, speaking with the authority of heaven, is calling them to get ready, prepare the way, "clean up your act!" Because the Messiah is about to appear.

A second thing was happening: Jesus of Nazareth comes up out of the Jordan River as the Anointed One of God. Speaks as no one on this earth has ever spoken. Heals the sick. Opens blind eyes. And announces, "The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe the good news!"

Never in Israel's history has God spoken as clearly and with such force. And they aren't getting it! They don't see it!

Three and a half years go by. Jesus is approaching Jerusalem for the last time. He is coming to lay down his life. And as he draws near, and looks down upon the city from the Mount of Olives, he begins to weep. His heart is broken, as he says,

"Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But now they are hid from your eyes. For the days shall come upon you, when your enemies will cast up a bank about you, and surround you, and hem you in on every side, and dash you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave one stone upon another in you; because you did not know the time of your visitation." Luke 19:41-44

"You did not know the time of your visitation. You didn't get it. It was right in front of you, and you didn't see it! It was speaking to you with words straight out of heaven, and you didn't hear it.

Now it's too late. Your hour of judgment is at hand."

And so it came to pass. Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman armies. The Temple was demolished. And the Chosen People were scattered over the earth, without a homeland for 2000 years.

"You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky; but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?"

But what does that have to do with us? John the Baptist is long gone. Jesus is no longer visible on this earth. This is the 21st Century! This is the high-tech age!

Yet even in this high-tech age, the words that Jesus spoke are as alive as ever. Heaven and earth will pass away, and those words will still be speaking, because Jesus lives in those words!

And now he is speaking to us against a backdrop of a world which is on the brink, and doesn't know it, just as Jerusalem was on the brink and didn't know it. As in Noah's day, we are busy buying and selling, getting and spending, eating and drinking. Nobody is paying attention to the connection between what Jesus is saying and what's about to happen on this earth. A flood is coming, and it won't be water this time.

This world is not paying attention. Our sleepy churches are not paying attention. But, as the storm clouds gather, the message of the Lord Jesus is simple. At this late hour Jesus offers each of us a choice:

We can accept his invitation to enter God's world --- for real --- now, here in this life, with both feet.

Or we can cling to this world and its ways --- which Jesus tells us is on its way to ruin.

One thing we cannot do: we cannot live with one foot in this world and one foot in God's world.

Jesus stands at the door of God's World and says,

"If you're tired of the rat race, if you're fed up with the deceit, if you're weary of the burden of your own sin, come to me. Come just the way you are, with all your burdens, all your flaws, sins and weaknesses."

All we have to do is say, "Here I am, Lord! I throw myself on your mercy. Take me into your kingdom and show me the way!"

Do this, and mean it, and instantly you are in God's World. You are breathing the atmosphere of heaven even while you walk this earth. Your feet are planted on a new path, you are provided with everything you need to stay on the path, and you are in the company of sisters and brothers who are making the same journey.

But --- and here's the part we never seem to talk about in our churches --- once you walk through the door and plant your feet on this new path, it is not all "peaches and cream."

As surely as this world is coming under judgment, you are going to pass through storms of trial. This new life that God puts into you, this holy fire that burns in you, is going to be tested and tried. And you are going to have to keep your connection with God alive, as you pass through the storms. You need to be

aware of this before the storms come.

It was a peaceful day when Jesus sat with his disciples on the Mount of Olives, looking down over the city, with the magnificent Temple buildings gleaming in the sunlight. But Jesus wanted these men to see more than that. He wanted them to see what was really going on, to interpret the present time, and be ready. So he went on to say....

"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and put you to death; and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away, and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold. 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 nations, and then the end will come." Matthew 24:9-14

Tradition tells us that every one of those men who sat with Jesus that day, with the possible exception of the apostle John, died a violent death. They were all tested.

Of course, what kind of trial, what kind of testing is coming our way is known only to God. Testing can come in a thousand ways. But it will come.

And the only way we will keep our connection with God strong and alive when it comes, is to pick up our cross and start carrying it now. To embrace that cross.

"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." Matthew 16:24

To pick up our cross is to say, "Lord Jesus, you laid down your life for me; so I am offering up my life to you as a living sacrifice --- even if it becomes a dying sacrifice. I am yours. I will make whatever changes you demand."

Keep holding on to that cross. Then, when the storm comes and the winds blow and the earth shakes, you will stand firm --- because you are anchored to the cross, his cross and yours.

"You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky; but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?"

So what do we see as we look out there at our present time with eyes opened by God's Spirit? We see two things:

We see a world which is on the brink of a time of severe testing. Whether it is to be the final time of testing, only God knows.

We see a door opening on another world, a world which will never be destroyed.

Inside that door stands the Crucified and Risen One with arms outstretched in welcome:

"If you're tired of the rat race, if you're fed up with the deceit, if you're weary of the burden of your own sin, come to me. Come through the door into new life.

Come just the way you are, with all your burdens, all your flaws, sins and weaknesses.

Give me your old life now, and, beginning at this moment, I will give you a new life. I will come to dwell in you.

And if you walk with me, I will guide you through your remaining days on this earth, with all its storms, and lead you safely into the world beyond.

Will you come? "

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/richard-e-bieber/interpreting-the-present-time/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net