

The Final Awakening?

by Richard E. Bieber

Richard E. Bieber's sermon emphasizes the urgent need for believers to awaken spiritually and prepare for the coming of the Lord amidst global chaos.

Scripture: Ephesians 5:14

Topics: "End Times", "Spiritual Awakening"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about a time of global chaos and the awakening of the Body of Christ amidst the darkness, drawing parallels to biblical prophecies and parables. The sermon emphasizes the importance of discerning the signs of the times and being spiritually awake, having oil in our lamps, and recognizing God as the ultimate authority in our lives. It highlights the imminent Final Awakening where ordinary believers will proclaim the gospel with power, leading to a transformation of the Church into a nimble army of light, akin to Gideon's army in the Old Testament.

Transcript

After years of wars, revolutions and terror attacks, a strange peace has settled over the earth. A major treaty has just been signed. Over at the United Nations, they're intoxicated with joy, as the guns grow silent.

Then, right in the middle of the global celebration, comes word of a nuclear explosion in the mid-Pacific. It's a warning shot from North Korea! Within hours the planet is engulfed in the flames worse than ever. Things are beyond the control of any dictator or prime minister or president.

Here's how it's described in the 2nd Psalm:

Why do the nations rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel against the Lord, and against his anointed one, saying, "let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." (Let us break away from God.)

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh....

Psalm 2

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh? God is laughing? God has a surprise for the movers and shakers of this world. The dry bones of Ezekiel's vision are beginning to stir once more. There is a rattling

and a shaking as the bones come together, take on flesh, begin to breathe. This time it's the Body of Christ that's waking up! Is it the Final Awakening? Only God knows.

And yet, God expects us to discern the meaning of what's going on out there.

"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

Who can deny that signs of alarm are darkening the horizon? Anybody with eyes can see that on every level this earth is teetering on the edge of trouble.

But God is still on the throne. Things are simply unfolding as our Lord describes them in Matthew 24 and 25. The dry bones of Ezekiel's vision are stirring again. Or to put it more accurately, the Ten Virgins of Jesus' parable are waking up.

"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be compared to ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.

Five of them were foolish, and five were wise.

For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them;

but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.

As the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there was a cry,

'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'

Matthew 25

Sure enough, the believers fell asleep during the Bridegrooms' long delay. The world looks around and says, "What happened to the Church of God? It never did amount to much, with the clergy forever telling people what to do. And now it's obvious; the church is totally useless, who needs it?"

But wait a minute! The Virgins are waking up, as the Church goes through a shake-up. The Virgins of the parable are being sifted, as the Church of Christ enters its time of judgment.

All the half-baked believers are going to be weeded out. Only those whose lamps are still burning will enter into the Bridegroom's glory.

Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps.

And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'

But the wise replied, 'Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.'

And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut.

Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.'

But he replied, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.'

Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

Matthew 25

The Virgins are rubbing their eyes as they emerge from their long slumber. And the ones who still have oil in their lamps will go in with the Lord to the Marriage Feast.

But before he brings them into the Feast, there's one more thing they have to take care of. Those lamps that they carry will have to shine across this dark world one last time.

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 224

During the Final Awakening, all nations are going to see the light of God. They are going to hear the gospel of the kingdom proclaimed with unspeakable power, not from big-time evangelists, but from ordinary folks all over the earth, whose lamps burn with the light of God.

We're not talking about some program dreamed up by church officials in a musty office. We're talking about a spiritual lightning strike straight out of heaven. God stirring up the dry bones, waking up the sleeping Virgins. God separating the lamps that sputter from the lamps that burn clear--causing the clear lamps to shine across this earth one last time.

As the light shines across the earth, the Church, as we've always known it, will be supplanted by a Church that doesn't even look like what we think of as church. It will look like the army of Gideon, way back in the Old Testament. Gideon's army was a motley collection of 300 men, who, in the darkness of the night, surrounded the huge camp of the Midianite troops with nothing but torches and trumpets. At a signal from Gideon, they smashed the jars hiding their torches and blew their trumpets. When the Midianites heard the trumpet blast and saw those torches surrounding them on the hills above, they fell into a panic and started fighting each other in the dark. Then Gideon's army moved in and mopped up.

Of course, Gideon's army did not begin with those 300 men. It began as an army of thousands and thousands. God kept trimming it down, more and more until it was just 300 strong. In the same way the Body of Christ on earth is going through a shake-up and a sifting. Out of this shake-up will come a church that will no longer be a ponderous religious institution, but a nimble army of light. This spiritual army will cover the earth with a Word so clear that those who have ears to hear will know that they are hearing the Voice of God.

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.

But who are the people in this army, this awakened Church? Are we among them? Those who belong to this army of light have three things in common:

They are awake.

They have oil in their lamps.

They know who's Boss.

First of all--These people are awake.

When the church first began, they used to sing a hymn which is found in Paul's letter to the Ephesians:

Awake, O sleeper,

rise from the dead,

and Christ shall give you light.

Am I awake? Are you awake? Many people who think they're awake are actually asleep. Saul of Tarsus was on fire with zeal, yet he was a spiritual zombie ---until the Lord woke him up on the road to Damascus.

We don't wake up when people shout at us or preach at us or threaten us with hell. We wake up when we hear a voice that comes from the world beyond: the voice of the Lord.

The voice of the Lord came to the Rich Man through the cries of a beggar at his gate. But the Rich Man kept his ears shut and went on sleeping. Sometimes the Lord calls us through the words of a hymn, or the rebuke of a friend. Once we hear that call, we have to decide whether we're going to wake up, or go on sleeping.

The "Christian world" is loaded with spiritual zombies who don't want to wake up. But even now the Master is doing what he can from his side to shake us out of our slumber.

Awake, O sleeper,

rise from the dead,

and Christ shall give you light.

Secondly, the men and women in this spiritual army have oil in their lamps.

"Of course I have oil in my lamp!" we insist. "I've been baptized. I'm filled with the Spirit." Yet, if we actually took the trouble to look down at our lamp, we might discover that it's sputtering and coughing smoke.

It's not the spiritual life I had last year, or the grace that flowed from me once upon a time. It's 'What kind of light is coming from my lamp right now?' Do I have oil in my lamp? Is it burning clear?

When Jesus says, "You are the light of the world," he's talking to men and women who have oil in their lamps. Who shine with his light. You look at these people, and you see the Kingdom of God.

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

Finally, this new church, is made up of men and women who know who's Boss.

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon.

Matthew 6

You cannot serve God and Money. Or God and vanity. Or God and your ego.

In the old Church World, it's often God along with Money. Trust God, but don't forget to raise the funds. Make sure you pile up enough gold to build that cathedral. But it's not just the incessant fund-raising going on in the Christian world. It's the daily life of the average believer. It's our obsession with money and the things it can buy. What a difference it makes when we truly understand who's Boss.

In this new army money is no longer Boss. God is Boss, and money is God's business. And, lo and behold, God provides all the money we need.

But at midnight there was a cry,

"Behold the Bridegroom! Come out to meet him."

God has a surprise for the movers and shakers of this world. While they're busy scrambling for power, and fighting wars at the expense of the suffering masses, the dry bones are coming to life. An Army of Light is awakening to the call of the Lord. And this army will cover the earth with heaven's final call.

You and I are among the dry bones, the Ten Virgins. God's wake-up call is coming to us even now.

The question each of us needs to ask is:

Am I awake?

Do I have oil in my lamp?

Do I truly understand who's Boss?

Mercifully, to this hour there has been no nuclear explosion in the mid-Pacific. The world is not engulfed in flames. But the horizon out there is growing darker and darker.

Out of the darkness shines one bright light: the Body of Christ waking out of its slumber in answer to the Master's call.

Where we fit in this picture depends on what we do when we hear that call---which comes to us today in this place and tomorrow and all the tomorrows until "tomorrow" is no more.

Awake, O sleeper,

rise from the dead,

and Christ shall give you light.

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