

INTERPRETING THE PRESENT TIME- LIFT UP YOUR EYES AND SEE



A certain king departed into a far country and left his castle in the charge of his five sons. Before he went, the king warned his sons that the armies of the enemy were near and that they would try to conquer the castle while he was gone.

"If you watch from the towers you will be able to observe their movements and thwart their attacks with archers on the walls. But keep the watch going day and night!"

At first the five brothers held to their father's instructions. Watchmen on the towers continuously observed the movements of the enemy. Three times the enemy was driven back suffering heavy losses. Then there was a lull in the attack. And during the lull the brothers took to arguing about which move the enemy would try next.

"They'll come down from the northern mountains," said one.

"No, they'll come up from the riverbank", said another.

"No", said a third. "They'll come from east and west at the same time."

The argument grew bitter and spread through the whole army until those of one persuasion hardly spoke to those of another.

The troops who expected an attack from the north ate, drank and slept on the northern wall.

Those who looked for an attack from the river held to that side of the castle.

The brothers continued their argument every day and far into every night. Watchmen were no longer stationed on the towers, since everyone was so sure he knew where the attack would come from. Weeks went by with no sign of the enemy as division within the castle grew more and more bitter. Had there been anyone in those towers they would have observed a line of young trees moving up from the south. They would have seen strange looking machinery slowly rolling toward the mote by the main gate.

But the brothers and their divided troops were too busy theorizing to observe what was actually going on outside the walls. It was in the middle of a sword fight between the two oldest brothers that the roars of the spectators were interrupted by a trumpet blast, a mighty crash, the collapse of the giant gate, and the inrush of enemy troops. By morning there wasn't a soul left alive in the smoldering ruins of that castle.

As Christians argue about the rapture, the antichrist, the gifts, modes of baptism, and forms of church life, things are going on outside the castle that would tell them much if they only opened their eyes. As we talk about our doctrines, about our future things, and past things, we are missing the meaning of this present hour.

He also said to the crowds, "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

Jesus wasn't even talking to disciples here, He was talking to the multitudes. And He called them hypocrites for not being able to interpret the hour in which they lived.

He didn't pity them for their ignorance.

He judged them for their willful blindness.

"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades."

Luke 10:13-15

Those cities were held accountable for not recognizing God when He walked their streets.

Now if Jesus calls down this kind of judgment on the multitudes for not discerning the times, how much more does He expect His disciples to know what's going on.

He has no patience with disciples who let themselves be lulled to sleep by the spirit of this world. He says to the church at Sardis.

"Awake, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death." "If you will not awake, I will come like a thief and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you."

Revelation 3:2a & 3:3b

There are things we need to know about this present hour. If we don't see these things clearly now, and if we don't live accordingly now, the awakening will come when it's too late to do anything about it.

I. We need to see that we are living in a time of judgment.



The Spirit of the Lord is saying to us,

"Can't you see that this world is already under judgment of God?"

"Can't you see that this world in which you now live has cracks in its foundations that tell you it's going to fall in this generation? Open your eyes"

You remember the time when some of the disciples spoke of the temple and how it was adorned with noble stones. Jesus said,

"As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

Luke 21:6



Open your eyes!

This city and everything in it, including the temple, is already under judgment. Her house is already desolate. Destruction and bloodshed are only a matter of time.

It makes a difference in your living whether you see this world as solid or crumbling.

The vast majority of professing Christians, especially those who talk much about the rapture and the end, are nevertheless hanging on to the things of this world as if they were solid rock.

- They are not discerning this present hour.
- They are not reading the signs on all sides that the castle is coming down.

What do you see when you read the newspaper?
What do you see when you walk down the street?
What do you see as you drive along the freeway?
What do you see when you look at the house you live in?

If you are using the eyes God has given you, you see things that will soon pass. There won't be one stone left upon another.

This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.
(1 Corinthians 7:29-31)

2. We need to see that we are living in a time of harvest.

The Spirit of the Lord is saying to us,

Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. *(John 4:35)*

Jesus expected those disciples to be able to scan the faces of the Samaritan multitude that was coming down the road and hear cries of God-hunger rising from their hearts.

Lift up your eyes and see!

So He says to us, "Don't be talking about the final harvest of this earth as something still to begin friend, it's here. And every believer reading these words is being sent to labor in it. Not starting next month, but right now!"

"But Lord, I'm sorry. I simply cannot see the harvest you're talking about. All I can see is a world loaded with cold, hostile people. Every time I open my mouth I get rebuffed. All I ever get is ridicule and hatred."

Look through the ridicule and the hostility to what is really there, just as you look through the red morning sky to the rain that's on its way.

3. We need to see that we are living in a time of trouble.

The Spirit of the Lord is saying to us,

"Can't you see that Jesus is Lord over the storm?"



"Master, Master, we are perishing!" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm. He said to them, "Where is your faith?"

Matthew 8:24-25

"Where is your faith, why can't you see?"

It was a storm all the time, not just out on the lake, and the Lord of the storm was with them.

There is not one of us who is not surrounded by uncertainty. Absurd things are happening to us. Our lives and circumstances are becoming less and less predictable. But our Lord expects us to see that in the middle of all this- He is with us - Lord over the storm - that not one thing is out of His control.

The same Lord who walked with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace is walking with His saints in the furnace of affliction. He doesn't keep them out of the furnace, He keeps them safe in God in the heart of the flame, in the center of the storm.

4. We need to see that we are living in a time of temptation - the temptation to compromise.

The Spirit of God is saying to us,

"Can't you see that any compromise with evil is death?"



And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.

Matthew 18:9

The name of this world is compromise. Mix a little good in with the bad and who can condemn you? Do a few good things to take the sting out of a lifetime of selfishness, and who can condemn you? And, if you're living for the Kingdom, bless your heart, that's nice, but keep a few bridges open back to the world in case it gets too rough.

How many men and women of God who should know better have fallen for this. They don't call it compromise. They call it "being practical", "using common sense", and down they go.... life after life, church after church.

Whoever puts his hand to the plow and looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God.

Every time we start to compromise with the world, and the Spirit convicts us, if we'll listen and do something about it, we're preserved. But when we harden our hearts and close our eyes to what God is showing us and go right on compromising, our light goes out.

'I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

Revelation 2:19-20

To compromise!

While the believers sit around discussing the battle, arguing about the proper weapons to use, the enemy continues his work and the harvest languishes for lack of reapers.

The message of the Spirit to the church across the earth, at this hour is, open your eyes to what's taking place outside the castle, and act!



“When you see a cloud rising out of 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?”

“For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they did not know until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of man.”

Matthew 24

Jesus keeps it simple.

He just says, “Pay attention”.

“See that no one leads you astray.”

He gives no time frame.

Jesus simply stands at the door of the Kingdom and keeps saying, “Come on in!”

**Once we enter the Kingdom, we're ready for the final hour,
no matter when it comes.**

Meanwhile

We keep our eyes on the kingdom and our hearts on the King.

We walk in his light.

We practice his mercy.

We speak the truth.

We love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves.



And let the fire fall when it will!

Prayer: Yes Lord, help us to lift our eyes and see, really see what is going on around us. Help us not only to see, but also to interpret the times we are in. Help us to discern your judgment of the evil that is permeating every corner of this earth. Help us to see the harvest before us now...the hungry, misguided, lost souls. Help us to see, believe, and live like you are still Lord in the midst of the darkness, chaos and troubles. Help us see and not be tempted to compromise with the evil around us and to be led astray. And most of all help us not only to see these things but to act... and yes, yes. to keep our eyes and hearts on you ...to keep walking in your light...to keep practicing your mercy...to keep speaking the truth ... and to keep loving you and others with all that we have. Amen.

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Message: Richard E. Bieber 2005 ...the added ending from a 2021 short "Like the Days of Noah".

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