

A Plea for the Serious Consideration of God

by Art Katz

The sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing God and the dangers of unbelief and arrogance, highlighting the significance of the Holocaust in relation to God's character and the urgency of heeding God's warning.

Scripture: Psalm 46:1, Psalm 46:10, Lamentations 3:27-29, John 7:17, Romans 3:4

Topics: "The Importance of Faith", "Understanding God's Sovereignty"

Description

Art Katz emphasizes the necessity of understanding God's character in the face of calamity, particularly addressing the Jewish community regarding the Holocaust. He argues that questioning God's moral intelligence or power reveals a deep-seated unbelief and a failure to recognize God's sovereignty. Katz urges believers to be still and acknowledge God, suggesting that true knowledge of Him is essential for spiritual survival and understanding. He warns against the dangers of murmuring against God, as it can lead to spiritual ruin, and calls for a return to a reverent acknowledgment of God's presence in history. Ultimately, he stresses that our eternal destinies hinge on our knowledge of God, which must be rooted in faith and obedience.

Transcript

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A message, especially but not exclusively, for our Jewish kinsmen as we approach the end of the millennium Be still and know that I am God...(Psalm 46:10) There is a connection between the strange providences of God and what we know of Him, and we have to learn to interpret the mysteries of life in the light of our knowledge of God. Unless we can look the darkest, blackest fact full in the face without damaging God's character, we do not yet know Him. (Oswald Chambers, My Utmost for His Highest, 7/29, my emphasis) Jewish indictment of God for His supposed failure in the Holocaust is not something that should be lightly passed over.

I want to suggest that it reveals depths of hidden unbelief and a disposition, ever present, to discredit and dishonor God that overtly states or implies the critics moral superiority over Him ("We would never have allowed that if we were God"), as if He lacked an elementary moral intelligence or--more improbable

still--was powerless to act upon it. Such a disposition can be concealed even to the most devout religious practitioner so long as the conditions of one's life are not troubled nor overturned.

But calamity of the proportion of the Holocaust, IN ITSELF, presupposes God. That is to say, that nothing of that magnitude can be imagined independent of Him. Therefore does the psalmist enjoin us "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He hath made in the earth" (Ps. 46:8). Its very magnitude instructs us to hold our peace (i.e., not murmur against Him) who is not required, being GOD, to give us an account! Rather, the disposition of heart and mind pleasing to God is expressed by the apostle Paul in quoting the Psalmist David: "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, [Ps.51:4] 'That you may be found just when you speak, and blameless when you judge'" (Romans 3:4, my emphasis).

What is irreducible here is the assurance of God as God, that is, in all the unchangeableness of the divine nature and attributes of which God's indisputable righteousness is foundational and intrinsic--even in the face of the most seeming and glaring of contradictions. "The bare consideration that GOD IS GOD [in itself] be sufficient to still all objections and oppositions against the divine sovereign dispensations" (Jonathan Edwards, 18th c. American theologian/preacher). To indict God or to raise a question against Him with regard to his omniscience, power, or moral character is an unbelievable impertinence and arrogancy of spirit--sufficient in itself to justify, as judgment, the very calamity complained against!

"Be still" is not an option or suggestion, but a divine warning and command to check this very disposition from rising up out of our humanity. It becomes also the very condition for the knowing of God [obedience being the prerequisite for revelation--see John 7:17; Oswald Chambers, My Utmost for His Highest, July 27] that follows: "and know that I am God." This knowledge exceeds and eclipses the shallow and inadequate faith (if not sinfully erroneous view) with which we were satisfied before the calamity came, that God rightly desires and for which He waits.

What if our eternal destinies were fixed relative to the knowledge of God with which we enter it? Yet if this better knowledge is forfeited by so much as a murmur, it would be better to assume ourselves guilty of sin proportionate to the magnitude of the calamity than to take God to task for His 'failure' in having allowed it! And this, not so much for what we have done, but rather for what we are, as indicated by the very propensity to presumptively question God. It is good for a man to bear the yoke...let him sit alone uncomplaining and Silent in hope, because God has laid the yoke upon him...Let him put his Mouth in the dust [in abject recognition of his unworthiness]; there may yet be hope (Lamentations 3:27-29 Amplified Bible).

What then, "accident," "circumstances," aberrations of history and of men? To remove God from history is to remove God! It is a dreadful thing to quarrel against God; Israel's wilderness murmurings destroyed that generation. Why should we suppose that the historically calamitous judgments of God, Egypt in the Exodus, Israel in the wilderness, the destruction and dispersal of the Northern Kingdom, the Babylonian Captivity, the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD (with the wholesale annihilation of its people and the enslavement and dispersal of its survivors) terminate with antiquity?

Is the unchanging God (what He must necessarily be by definition as God) averse or incapable of comparable judgment and calamity in modernity? Or would we think it unbecoming of Him to assert His 'Old Testament' wrath and fury in our civilized age of progress and vaunted social and moral standards that we have raised? What if these standards are themselves the very substitution for God in our own hoped for foundations for peace? If AFTER such a calamity as the Holocaust we presume to go about to

secure such a world on that basis (as if the calamity had not taken place), as if its tenets remain unquestioned, what future is to be expected not having heeded the instruction of our past?

The cry of God remains and is all the more urgent therefore: "Be still [cease from what you are about] AND KNOW [really know!] that I am GOD." The want of this knowledge, I would submit, has been our historic undoing, and remains, I am proposing, the greatest threat to our future as Jews. We are bidden to seek the faith of the psalmists who remind us in this very psalm that "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, therefore we will not fear" (46:1). What more lamentable thing then to awaken on the Day of Eternity to the realization that we "did not know as we ought to know"; that our whole life was lived in the error of an inadequate knowledge of God?

Surely then, every other reckoning must have been equally askew! Sense then the urgency of the cry of God's heart: "Be still and know that I am God"--in final appeal before that irremediable calamity--of which the Holocaust, tragic as it was, was but prelude and warning.

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