

Apocalyptic Eschatology

by Art Katz

The sermon explores the apocalyptic view of the end times, emphasizing the importance of Israel's restoration, the two resurrections, and the reward for the overcoming in the millennium.

Scripture: Philippians 3:7

Topics: "Eschatology", "Israel's Restoration"

Description

Art Katz delivers a profound sermon on 'Apocalyptic Eschatology,' emphasizing the chaotic and violent nature of the last days as a precursor to the establishment of God's kingdom. He discusses the significance of the two resurrections, highlighting that only the holy and blessed will rise first to participate in God's governance, while others may face a delayed resurrection. Katz warns of the impending moral collapse and the necessity for the church to prepare for the trials ahead, urging believers to strive for a deeper faith and understanding of God's purposes. He connects the restoration of Israel with the coming of God's kingdom, stressing the importance of recognizing the apocalyptic reality of our times. Ultimately, he calls for a renewed eschatological expectation that influences our present lives and walk with God.

Transcript

I have an outline of certain last days' events, but there is no way that I can adhere to a linear statement or discussion. You will find that I will keep coming back to certain themes in the interweaving of strands that make up the whole. These are the last days, and I have a view of the faith that can be called "apocalyptic." Apocalyptic means the "actual revealing," but it is accompanied by violence, chaos, disorder, collisions between light and darkness, and the shaking of all things that can be shaken.

It will be a convulsive time, very akin to birthing. Out of the death gasp of the world as we have known it historically, there is to be birthed the millennial age and the glory of another kingdom and the coming of God to this earth at a point in time. But the Gentile nations, who are ruled over by the principalities and powers of the air, will not want to "give up the ghost" without a last struggle against the coming rule of God. The scriptures speak of two resurrections that are separated by a thousand years.

Those that are holy and blessed rise first. They rise to the place of governmental participation in the kingdom that comes, but others who are not so equipped and prepared, who are neither holy nor blessed, but average knock-about saints, in my opinion, are raised a thousand years later in the general resurrection of the dead. And that is why Paul says, "I strive to attain. I don't look back, I press forward." In Philippians 3, Paul speaks of: counting all things as loss for Christ for the excellency of the knowledge of

Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection (vv. 7-10).

The use of the word "may" indicates something yet future, which Paul has not yet experienced. ...and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead (v. 11). Did Paul think that he would not be raised from the dead? That he was not saved? No, he must mean something else, something beyond that. That he might attain to that resurrection. In Hebrews 11, we read of the role call of those "of whom the world was not worthy," who "were sawn asunder", who "hid in the clefts of rocks", who "were tortured, but would not receive deliverance, for they were looking for a better resurrection."

There are resurrections and resurrections. And not everyone is going to rise with the first resurrection. Those that are holy, those that are blessed, and those that are overcomers will rule and reign with Him. They will rise in the first, preliminary resurrection. Those that have not this distinction, who were not willing for the sacrifice and the suffering in this life, will not attain to that resurrection. I believe that for them, there is the prospect of being raised a thousand years later without having had the privilege and the joy participating in laying the rudiments of the new kingdom.

They now have to stand with their hearts beating like trip hammers when the book of life is opened. Why should the book of life even be there if the second resurrection is only the resurrection of the unbelieving? A book of life indicates that among the general dead are those also who were Christians, who were saved, but never distinguished themselves or strove for the attainment for which Paul counted all things as dung and for which he pressed on to attain. Paul encouraged his readers to be found blameless in the day of the Lord's appearing.

He did not want them to miss this. He did not want that they should find themselves asleep for a thousand years, and then to awake, and to be judged before the white throne of judgment along with everyone else who has ever lived. He did not want them to go through that fearful moment to see if their names were in the Lamb's book of life. It seems to imply that it is quite possible that once one's name has been written in the book, it could be equally blotted out. The terror of standing there waiting, because eternity is at stake, is more than I would ever want to bear.

I want to be assured that I rise in that first resurrection, and the issue of that is to be determined in this life. Jesus' coming to establish His kingdom is altogether related to Israel's restoration. That is the key for His release. He could say to His Jewish kinsmen, "You will not see Me again until you shall say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.' " Jesus is bound up in the heavens waiting for "the restoration of all things spoken by the prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21).

What did the prophets speak about? They had one central message, namely, Israel's restoration to their God and to their Land in the last days out of extremity and crisis. The order of events seems to be: The ministry of the church to Israel in its last days of calamity and flight. Out of that, the redeemed of the Lord return to Zion, and Zion becomes the sanctuary, the dwelling place, and the locus of rule of the King who has come to establish the millennial reign. And the glorified saints, the overcomers of all ages, will be ruling and reigning with Him.

Those who are asleep in Christ from every preceding age rise first. Those overcomers who remain on the earth rise with them. The word "remain" in the Greek, I am told, means those who have barely survived a persecution. As I have said, those that were asleep--the 'martyrs' of every generation--cry out from under the altar, but are told to rest until their brethren shall be martyred like them. So it is an apocalyptic picture of bloodshed, of violence, of persecution, of devastation, and of dealings with Israel.

We do not like to contemplate apocalyptic things, and yet the scriptures seem to indicate that this is what the last days mean. And that is why I believe that there will be a "great falling away." So there are messengers that need to come to the church in order to alert it of the things that are at the door and soon to come. When the mother of the 'sons of thunder' asked if her sons could be at the left and the right hand of Jesus in glory, he replied, "It is not for me to confer those places."

But then He raised this question, "Can you drink the cup that I will drink?"--implying that there are such places, that there are places of honor and distinction and proximity to the Lamb who dwells in unspeakable light. Who can bear that light? For many it will be a mercy to be cast out into the outer darkness, who are not in any way prepared for light of that kind because they were unwilling in this life to "walk in the light as He is in the light." To be brought to this place requires chastisement and dealings and disciplines and shocking revelations about our true conditions that we would never have suspected.

If we are unwilling for the pain and humiliation of those things, we will not receive the reward of it either. In the mystery of God, it is His dealings with Israel that bring in the whole flood of these considerations. Israel is God's provision to wake the church to its end-time calling. But only Israel when it is properly understood in the apostolic and prophetic sense, and not in some sentimental way. Those who are hoping that present-day Israel would not only survive, but be established in the Land, and one day grow into becoming a millennial blessing, have no sense of this, and they do not desire it either.

My view is apocalyptic, which I believe was Paul's view. Let us not move away from an apocalyptic view of reality. Things will not improve, either for Israel or for unregenerate man. In a generation that has seen the prosperity gospel, name-it-and-claim-it, and all of that, this view is completely contrary, both in spirit and tenor, to what is currently celebrated in the church. To bring an apocalyptic end-time perspective will be both an unwelcome task and one in which our reward will not be great with men.

It will be resisted, not only by church traditions, but also by those who have played with the language of the last days as a kind of fad. There is a way that we can talk about the last days, and make of it another novelty, but when the prophetic reality of the last days breaks through, it might even be resisted by those who have only given lip service to the concept of it. It would require a magnitude of anointing to express this perspective and a character to bear the rejection, the reproach, the resistance, and the misunderstanding.

You will be called a doomsayer and negative--just as those who emphasize righteousness will be called legalists. You will have epithets directed at you, which if you are thin-skinned and thinking of yourself in a self-conscious spirituality, you will go down like a deck of cards. You will collapse at the very first blast. Can you imagine what kind of preparation it will take to fit and form men for that task? What will God employ in shaping the character and life to wean them from any necessity to be approved?

It requires the deepest work of the cross in order to be faithful in that calling. And yet, if it does not come, what hope have we for the church? When I use the word, Israel, I mean the Israel that is proliferated throughout all the nations, the Jewish people according to the flesh, the ethnic people that make up the

nation of Israel. Seeing the imminence of Israel's unexpected calamity, it is imperative to study the pattern of past disasters to arm us for the one that is future and final.

A warning needs to be prophetically sounded for the unwary, the unsuspecting and the unprepared, both for Israel and the church, so that there will be a basis for hope when the crisis comes. Hope is the life-sustaining reality that keeps one sane in the midst of crisis and calamity. If we do not see this as prefiguring the millennial glory, we will be overwhelmed just by the sense of despair. That is why Jesus says, "When you see these things beginning to take place, look up for your redemption draws near."

It is going to be devastating and there will be calamities everywhere. There will be a total moral collapse; the ugliness of violence will be rampant. Ungodliness will prevail in the earth. But when you begin to see these things, look up, for your redemption draws near. Jesus' use of the word redemption implies the final and full consummation of our salvation. His coming, His kingdom, the thing for which everything is preparation is near and at hand. As it is a crisis unto death, no aspect of the biblical faith will be left untouched.

This requires us to examine the totality of the biblical faith. The prophetic burden, hope, judgment, the millennial age, eschatology, and everything that is part of the faith is called into a re-examination. For the unprepared, it may mean the forfeiture of the faith in an end-time apostasy. For those who have not been willing to re-examine their faith in the light of the things that will be happening, it may mean the loss of their faith. At the same time, and by the very same factors, an entry into the depths of the understanding of the knowledge of God is available, that fits us not only to stand in that hour, but to be fitted for the millennial glories that follow.

In other words, the same events for some will mean the loss of faith, but for others, who are prepared, it will mean an increase in the depth of faith and in the knowledge of God. Everything depends upon how we view the apocalyptic conclusion of the age. Is our view based on the glory of God, and that these are the final last days' convulsions that must precede it? Will we count it a privilege to participate in whatever is required to that end because we see the eternal reward?

Are we jealous for a God who has been blasphemed all these ages, and rejected from the counsels of men, now coming into history, intervening, revealing Himself, acting in a powerful way, both in judgment and mercy, that precedes the final appearing of Himself in His own Person to rule and reign forever? Israel's casting out and exile from the Land is an ultimate extremity. Exile raises the issues of theodicy (i.e. the justifying of God when He seems to be absent), of judgment, of prophetic ministry, and the interpretation of Scripture itself, in an ultimate way.

Supposing that in order to obtain the purposes of God in bringing Israel to a final death of its own hope in itself, nothing less than the defeat and the expulsion of the nation again out of Israel will be required. Must Israel yet again experience another exile out of its own land? Well, what has that meant when they have experienced it in the past? What will it mean if they have to experience it now? In Colossians, we read that Jesus "disarmed the powers." In other words, He did not inflict a final defeat.

That is left for church. When it takes place, the whole fallen, angelic realm will be cast out of their heavenly, governmental places. Who will replace them? I believe it will be those who make up that "fullness of the Gentiles" spoken of in Romans 11. We know that the purpose of this church age is to "find a people for His name from among all nations" (Acts 15:14), and I believe that there is an actual number. And that God is preparing and fitting believers for rule, that we shall rule and reign with Him from the

heavenly places.

We are God's substitute for the fallen angels, in my opinion. It does not say that in so many words. I cannot show you explicit scriptures, but I put together a clue here and a clue there. And one of the most profound clues is in 1 Corinthians 6. Paul was outraged to find two believers going to a court of the law of the world to resolve a dispute among themselves. He said, "What are you doing? Don't you know that you are going to rule over angels and nations?" (Paraphrased).

In other words, it seems that they didn't know that they were being prepared for an eternal, governmental place. In one of Jesus' parables, He talks about faithful stewards and the rewards for faithfulness. "Some will rule over five cities and some will rule over ten." When? In the time of the millennial kingdom. From what place? From the heavenlies. What did Jesus say to Nathaniel? "What, you're impressed I saw you under the fig tree? I will show you a greater thing. Angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

The word "angel" literally means "messenger" or "servant," and I believe that that is a picture or a hint of the destiny of the overcoming church. The reward for the overcoming is a governmental place in His eternal kingdom, ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. We will be able to be visible, or become invisible. We can be in one place, or another, as it serves the purposes of God in our governmental function, some over two cities, some over five and some over ten. It says in Revelation 21 that when the Lord comes, He brings His reward with Him to give to each man according to his works.

This incentive is little understood in the modern-day church, and that is why it is essentially content with mere church attendance. But our works that will pass through the fire of judgment, that will not be made of hay, wood and stubble, but of precious stones, will earn for us an eternal distinction in the government of God. Eternal reward is a crown and a distinction relative to our place in the millennial kingdom. Not everyone comes to the same place in the same proximity to the throne.

Some are even cast out into the outer darkness, where there is a wailing and a gnashing of teeth. This may mean the unsaved and unregenerate, but will it also include those believers who have been shallow and conventional and superficial, who had no distinction in this life, whose works did not pass the fire but were hay, wood and stubble, or who had no works at all, and they were eternally fixed at a place less than what might have been theirs had they given themselves to the purposes of God?

Governing implies an administrative place, but that does not mean we file papers in some bureaucratic way. To administer and to rule is to bring the wisdom of God to bear upon the situations to which God brings us in the millennial kingdom. We will be an influence for good with the nations and with Israel. In contradistinction, the powers of darkness have up till now been instruments of evil. They turn the attention of men away from God. We will turn the attention of men toward God.

God's purpose is a cosmic conclusion of the whole saga of redemptive history being consummated with the establishment of an eternal kingdom, a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. In fact, heaven and earth will not ultimately be separate and distinct regions. What makes them new is that they converge. Heaven has come to earth and earth has become heaven. It is the final, ultimate, last reconciliation of all. The Jerusalem from above comes down and over the Jerusalem from below, and everything is one.

It is the final consummation of everything. The government is upon His shoulder. Every knee has bowed and every tongue confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord. But He has a stubborn people in the earth who are the earthly agency of that kingdom, namely Israel, the Jew. Having instructed the disciples for forty days in His resurrected body on the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, He was asked of them, "Is it time now to establish the kingdom?" And He didn't rap them on the knuckles and say, "When are you guys going to grow up?"

This is not a kingdom for you Jews. This is a universal, global rule." But He didn't say that at all. Rather, He said, "It is not time for you to consider that now. Now is the time to wait in Jerusalem for the gift that was promised." But this implies that there is a time in the future, and that they had every legitimate right to ask of the kingdom, as Jews, because it pertains to them equally as it pertains to all mankind. In fact, if it does not come to them first, it does not come to all mankind.

Do we have a millennial expectation? Are we tasting of the power of the age to come? Are we living in the very anticipation of it? Do we have an eschatological expectation? Does it affect our present life and walk now? This is the blessed hope. It's a hope that has a particular power and which animated the church at the first. It was the blessed hope of His coming, His kingdom, His millennial glory, through Israel's restoration after their last days' sifting and trial, through the mercy extended by the church to release the King from heaven that His kingdom comes. "And the law of the Lord shall go forth out of Zion and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem, and nations shall study war no more" (Isaiah 2:3).

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/art-katz/apocalyptic-eschatology/>

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