

Apostolic Foundations - Part 3

by Art Katz

The sermon emphasizes the importance of resurrection and eschatology in the Christian faith, and the need for the Church to live in the power of resurrection and judgment, and to confront the world with the truth.

Duration: 59:26

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Acts 17:30, 1 Corinthians 7:29-31, 2 Corinthians 6:2, 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16, 2 Peter 3:10-13

Topics: "Apostolic"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of knowing and accepting God's truth. He explains that God overlooked the times of ignorance but now commands all people to repent. The speaker also highlights the significance of the resurrection of Jesus as assurance of God's judgment. He shares a personal experience of witnessing the power of God's spirit in action, leading to a powerful revival. The sermon concludes with a call to live in anticipation of Christ's return and to endure suffering for the sake of the kingdom.

Transcript

If I look like I'm stalling, I am. Cannot hope for anything from me. The Lord has really given me a burden, one that I have never before expressed or addressed, and I don't think that's a many... kind of a lost theme in modern-day Christendom, and it falls to me to tonight address it.

And it has everything to do with resurrection, and except that it be expressed by the resurrection, by the power of that life, there's no way in my understanding that any man can humanly assemble, bring together this theme and express it. I mean, you can take a shot at it, but it's not going to be the penetrating transmission from heaven that it must be in order to restore to the Church something that is central to the whole Gospel and has profoundly been lost for millennia, namely, the eschatological and apocalyptic vision that Paul had and that characterized the early Church. Now that I've said that, you're no more richer than you were before, and I don't know that I'll actually give you a definition of either word, but like the great words, I've said this before and I'll continue to say it, they need to be apprehended, or rather, we need to be apprehended by them.

One of the laments of God, a rebuke that God had made to Israel is that the knowledge of me is taught by the precepts of men. We scratch our heads and think, well, what's wrong with that? I mean, is there any other way? God saw that as a low watermark of the apostate condition of Israel that the knowledge of him had to be communicated by precepts. And by a like kind of measure, when we have to repair to a

dictionary to find the meaning of apostolic words, it's also a rebuke, it's also a reproach, it's also a statement that we are beneath the faith.

So, eschatological has to do with the end things, end time things. Apocalyptic is that consummating final event, the coming of the Lord, the day of the Lord, the judgment of God, the final consummation of all to which divine salvation history has been pending. And this was so burning in the consciousness of the church there was such an urgency and expectancy in their spirit that they thought that the event was imminent, that it was at hand.

In fact, the phrase at hand is actually from the scriptures. The time is short. Let those who be married be as though they were not, lest you be hindered, for the time is short.

There are so many other scriptures that could be quoted of this kind that remind us that the church lived in a certain tension of imminent, that is to say, about to happen event that would transpose, transform, transcend everything, that would vindicate their suffering, their persecution, their reproaches, their position in the world, suffering the reproaches of their Christ, and that there would be a glorious consummation, righteousness would come and it would be the end, but it would be a glorious beginning, that there'd be a righteousness, a new heaven and a new earth wherein would dwell righteousness. We need to note that it's a remarkable thing that we who are 2,000 years closer to the event that they expected as imminent and at hand don't even begin to have the sense of urgency and expectancy that characterized them. There has actually been a patent rejection of Paul's apocalyptic view as being a kind of embarrassment to the faith that maybe he and the early church were actually mistaken because after all, it did not come.

The parousia, the advent, the second coming of the Lord has been delayed and delayed and delayed and delayed. So they probably had it all wrong and they were naively living a kind of fool's dream, thinking that the Lord was at hand, which thought, by the way, produced such a vibrant quality of life, such a dynamic, that their proclamation and their message penetrated all the world. Lord, help me to find the appropriate quotations at the right time.

I've got two books with me tonight, both gems. Here it is, praise God. A certain theologian, his name is not important to us, who does not expect that the church should presently have that expectancy, says of the earlier church and about it, although this imagery is so remote from our modern ways of thinking, I believe that we can still have an idea of the extraordinary power which such eschatological convictions must have exercised in the lives of the people who held them.

To believe that one was living in the face of an end that might happen tomorrow, and in any case very soon, must have imparted a tremendous sense of urgency, responsibility and vitality. The appointed time has grown very short. Such a partial explanation of the amazing energy of the early Christian community is to be sought in its intense conviction of the approaching end.

But the conviction of the early community turned out to be mistaken, alack and alas. The end was postponed to the indefinite future, but we must notice that as soon as this happens, eschatology loses most of its power. I would only amend that to say the whole gospel loses most of its power, the church loses most of its power, because the eschatological view, the end time view, that expectancy is central to the whole apostolic sense of the gospel and has everything to do with the quality of its power and its penetration.

Understanding that, we can turn again to our familiar text of Acts 17. Just think, if this were the only text that survived time in history, the church would have ample to suffice it for generations and generations. It's so rich.

This enormous encounter, this ultimate encounter of the apostolic man with his counterpart, with his worldly counterpart, men schooled in the wisdom of the world, meeting at Mars Hill, the ultimate place where this collision, this confrontation occurs. And in case you were not here before, and even if you were, repetition doesn't hurt. And I'm reminding you again, we ourselves are intended for exactly that confrontation.

If we don't see that, we're not seeing apostolically. And if we don't see it, how shall we prepare for it? And if we don't prepare for it, what does that make of our Bible studies and our services but just some kind of weekly and routine kind of occasion? You see how much the end affects the present? How much a view of what the ultimate end is toward which things are tending affects how we presently live and order our lives? The shallowness and the casualness of much of our present Christian life has everything to do with the fact that we have lost sight of the eschatological apocalyptic end God wants to restore. So here's Paul speaking not to a carnal church, but speaking to Greeks who don't know which end is up.

They've never been to Hebrew school. They wouldn't know pastrami from rocks if they tripped over it. They're Gentiles of the Gentiles and they're steeped in the wisdom of the world.

And they even look with disdain and contempt upon everything that's Hebraic, let alone this piece of Hebraism, Paul himself, who they call a ragpicker, a babbler. What will this babbler say? He was not an estimable thing to look upon. He was the antithesis of all that they represented in eloquence, in wisdom, in worldly knowledge.

He was God's man. And as we've seen in the two previous weeks, Paul did not spare them. He let them have it right in the pus, right in the kishkas.

He didn't mince words. He went right for the jugular vein. He recognized that the hour is indeed short and that the moment that God had given him, which no man could arrange, was an eternal moment and had to stand for eternity.

He was responsible. And we went through the kinds of things that he said, beginning with an insult. I perceive in all things you're too superstitious.

And him whom you ignorantly worship, I declare unto you. And then he goes on and tells them that God, who made of all men one blood and established the bounds of their habitations, if happily they might be found of God, is the whole purpose of human existence. Bang, bang, bang.

In the space of what? A minute, two minutes? A man gives the whole purpose for human existence to those who have spent their entire lives waiting to hear some new thing. Always seeking, but never coming to the knowledge of the truth. Preferring a God who is unknown and preferring that he remain so.

Because a God who is known is also a God who requires. And then he says in verse 30, Truly these times of ignorance God overlooked. But now commands all men everywhere to repent.

Because he has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising him from the dead. And when they heard of

the resurrection of the dead, some mocked while others said, We will hear you again on this matter.

So Paul departed from among them. He didn't even catch his breath. He didn't even shift from a philosophical tone to a religious tone.

He spoke the word of resurrection and the judgment of God with the same absoluteness and the same conviction as he had already spoken to them about what is the purpose of human existence. He didn't in any way think that it was embarrassing. He didn't in any way take into consideration that they had no previous exposure.

That these are new and alien concepts with which they are not familiar. He just let them have the truth smack dab right between the eyes. And you know what we have to recognize? That resurrection will condemn a man to being perceived by sophisticated Greeks as a babbler.

In fact, if you survey all the doctrines of the faith, virgin birth and triune God and what have you, I think that we might come to an agreement that of all of the doctrines, there's none which more stretches and tests human credulity than that of resurrection itself. That God can actually raise one from the dead. Resurrection is an ultimate thing.

So ultimate that if you go back over the gospel accounts, even the disciples and themselves staggered over the reality of the resurrection even when they perceived him in his resurrection body. It says, and they doubted. And they believed, but not yet unto joy.

There's something about it. Even the visible evidence in the resurrected Lord that so staggered their unbelief. Not because they were Jews, because they were men.

And don't think that your condition is better. What do you mean? I subscribe to the doctrine. Big deal.

The issue of the end times, the final issue that will decide the sheep from the goats is not those who believe the doctrine as against those who don't. Because even the false church and the world church will give nominal assent to correct doctrine. The thing that will separate the sheep from the goats is not those who give nominal assent.

It's to those who are living in the power of the resurrection life. Who know the resurrection because they live from it and by it. And if that were not so, you would not be hearing me tonight.

I'm impressed already the way I sound. All the more remembering what condition I was this afternoon. Aching and wasted and tired and confused and done in.

What then accounts for the clarity and the coherence and the forcefulness of my presence speaking. None other than the life that came forth from the dead. Hey guys, there's something incumbent on our agenda and that's to move from doctrine to reality.

There's only one little catch. The reality of the resurrection is always preceded by death. There'd be no resurrected Christ who had only feigned death.

Who had only gone through a simile of the appearance of it. Resurrection only came to that one who was stone cold dead. Absolutely limp and cold.

They're spoiled, done in, wiped out. A mess. He had no beauty that we should desire him.

His face was mawed more than any man. They count over 200 signs of wounds in the shroud of Turin. Which I believe is the actual shroud in which Jesus was wrapped.

From the top of his head, lacerations to the soles of his feet. His back, his sides, there wasn't a space that had not been touched by the lashing, by the pummeling of men. He was marred more than any man.

He was so abjectly a piece of death that even the two on the road to Emmaus were absolutely crestfallen and disillusioned and abject and devoid of hope. We had hoped it had been he who would have restored the glory of Israel. But look at that piece of shredded flesh now.

If ever you get to France, you've got to go to Colmar, which is in Alsace-Lorraine, and see the Grunwald painting of the crucifixion of Jesus. If you've read Ben Israel, you know that I went there as an atheist. On that same trip that culminated months later in my conversion, how was God preparing me by encounters with believers, by the word coming into my hand.

And among these encounters I met a German artist, a believer. A very precious man took me to his bosom and we had a wonderful time of sharing with a German. And he said, Artie said, you must not miss going to Colmar and seeing the Grunwald painting of the crucifixion of Jesus.

And so I went. Oh, I had seen depictions of Jesus on satin pillows with sequins, you know, velvet things and crosses with roses and all that kind of jazz, but enough to make one puke. But when I stood before that painting, I was transfixed by this Holy Ghost masterpiece.

I had never seen a man more deranged, more absolutely, whose humanity was so controverted by suffering unto death, that you wondered whether you were looking at a man or some lesser piece of creation, some animal. The hands were so gnarled, the feet so turned in, so twisted, the jaw agape, the suffering, the pangs of death, the pale, the sickly greenish hue of that skin, the gaping open wounds, the tongue. It was a horror.

We need to be confronted with that more. Because the world has been busy, even religiously, polishing it up. So that when we see Jesus on a cross, he more often looks like a ballet dancer, exposing his physique, than some man who has been the butt of the judgment of God for the sin of man through time.

But I just want to encourage you that that's not the end of that masterpiece. On the very other side, when you walk around, is the resurrection painting of the same Christ. My God.

Talk about Holy Ghost inspiration. Talk about power, as this figure breaks forth from the grave, and these Roman centurions topple over their helmets, their spears, and the immense power released by his resurrection. And every place where there was a gaping wound on the crucifixion site, beams of glory are pouring out.

The Lord of Glory coming forth, the King. Paul saw this ever before that painting was painted. He saw it by the eye of the Spirit.

It transfused his being. It filled his spiritual eyeballs, that it made him completely impervious to the glory that was Greece. He could walk through the world, and not be impressed by its tangible evidences, and estimable architecture, or its impressive philosophies.

He had seen the glorified and risen King. And he was awaiting his soon return. Who is going to vindicate the sufferings of the Church.

Who stood as a testimony to him, in the midst of an unbelieving and hostile world. How would you like to turn the clock back? How would you like to live in that generation? How would you like to be among that band of believers? Hanging in, despite the reproaches and the curses of the world against it. Despite the rebukes, despite the persecutions, despite the imprisonments and the suffering, knowing that he's coming soon, and it will be worth it all.

That as we have shared in his suffering, so too shall we share in his glory. That every evil that's in the world, its vileness and its unrighteousness, shall flee when the King comes, to establish his kingdom in his coming. How would you like to turn the clock back? But that's not what God is asking us.

That we have to go back into that. God is wanting us to live in that now. Because what has changed? I'm sick to the teeth of reading theologians and academicians, who tell us, since the enlightenment, since the advent of science, since the rise of rationalism, the Church, of course, cannot be expected to have apocalyptic views like this.

Baloney! They say the modern world, the world's lifestyle, its values. What has that to do with us? It's not adjusting Paul's apocalyptic view to our modern living conditions. It's adjusting our modern living conditions to Paul's apocalyptic view.

You can send me home now with my honorarium. For all 12 weeks. Because you just got it right now in one statement.

The whole issue of bridging the gap between apostolicity and institutional and even charismatic Christianity is addressing our lifestyle to bring it into conformity with the condition of life and reality that the first Church knew. And I'll tell you what, the Scriptures will speak to us in another way. We'll no longer be having Bible studies, reading about a letter that was sent to the Thessalonian Church or whosoever to encourage them facing persecution.

We will read it as if it were addressed to us who are facing persecution. Because the moment that you get apostolic in earnest, it will come. Okay.

These times of ignorance, God winked at, Paul says, but now commands all men everywhere to repent. If he commanded now 2,000 years ago, what is he commanding in 1986? Paul doesn't even make it an option. It's not even something to consider.

God commands. And I have the feeling that when Paul said that, men were confronted and faced with one of two responses. Either to fear and to tremble of a judgment that was at hand or to reject the man and the message and the God who sent him.

There was something ultimate about Paul speaking and about Paul's presence that required something from those who heard him. It was an apostolic confrontation. God commands all men everywhere to repent.

Why? Because he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness. The world includes Athens and St. Paul and Timbuktu and Brooklyn, New York and Oshkosh and the most remote communities of men everywhere and anywhere. God will judge the world.

Do you believe that? And are we living as if we believe that? Because, very frankly, there are few of us who have any sense of God as judge. Oh, we have a great sense of God as patsy. God as our buddy-buddy.

The Lord who is going to fix this for us and do that for us and make us prosperous in health and wealth and... But the God who is a judge. Our flesh shrinks from such consideration. And if we believe it, we only believe it nominally, shallowly.

We don't believe it sufficiently as a burning conviction so as to persuade men knowing the terror of God. And by the way, the God who is going to judge all the world is also going to judge the church. We are not exempt.

Paul said, And we shall be held accountable for everything that we have done in our body, both good and bad. You know how Paul lived? He lived in the consciousness that his life was continually being lived out before a judge who sees him. Now, I'm not... Or that Paul shriveled and bit his fingernails.

Cowering against this devastating monster God who is going to lower the boom. But he knew that there is an all-seeing God. He knows that there is a God before whom all men are transparent and with whom there is nothing hid.

And I'll tell you what. He didn't have to be watched lest he would fall into hanky-panky. He didn't have to worry whether he was going to run off with the organist or seduce the woman who had come to be counseled by him.

There is a safety. There is something provided when we can live in the conscious sense that there is a judge who sees us continually. It's not intimidating.

It's not threatening in the sense that you're going to be minimized. The heck of the matter is it's just the opposite. You'll be enlarged.

It's a freedom to know that there is such a God before whose sight our life is openly and freely lived. It will save us from hypocrisy and from deceit. It will save us from secret sins and from presumption.

It will communicate something of the awe and the fear of God that needs profoundly to be restored to the church. For we cannot persuade the world that there's a day that God has appointed which he will judge if we do not ourselves believe it for ourselves and live as if we believe it. Just imagine what would have been the effect on the lives of these Greek philosophers if they had believed that, that God has appointed a day, an apocalyptic moment when he's going to come no longer as the Lamb of God in humility as he was in his first advent but as the Lion of Judah in all of his divine prerogative and stature to judge the blasphemers who have blasphemed him and ridiculed him.

And made the Jesus Christ superstars and all of the mock, filthy, vile culture that has dragged his name through the mud. The arrogant Beatles and rock stars who said that they had as much power as Jesus because look at the effect on their audiences. Will one day stand before him and hear those very words played back while their knees turn to jelly.

Talking about knees turning to jelly, if I can be anecdotal, my first university encounter, I've had many, Harvard, Yale, Berkeley, Uppsala in Sweden, in Denmark, Tübingen in Germany, more than I can remember. I've been in confrontations in different parts of the world before the most radical and vicious

opponents of the gospel. You know how it began? In Urbana, Illinois, University of Illinois.

During the Kent State murder time, you remember that? The ferment of the Vietnamese war and the radicals were breaking loose everywhere. And some reason, a pastor invites me to speak on campus for seven days. And they printed up a little sticker and they put it everywhere without any break in the words, Cats is coming.

Cats is coming. It was everywhere. Cats is coming.

And they never told me they were doing that. So when I arrived in Urbana and came on campus and I saw the stickers everywhere, Cats is coming, I wanted to crawl into a hole. Who's cats? But you know, it's a Jewish name.

And sure enough, it intrigued Jews. They were out there. In fact, I even got into their fraternity house.

And we had a night, a meeting. Well, it was a debate with a professor from the university. Some liberal Paskinyak.

They served us steak. And he was having a ball. I was Jewish and I felt alienated from my kinsmen.

He was a Gentile and they were just lapping up all around him like he was some great culture hero and I was some piece of dung. I slipped away from the steak and I found myself a room and went down on my face before God to ask him who was cats. But we had a meeting that night He lasted about, I'll be generous, five minutes.

He made one or two remarks. I got up. Something came out of my mouth.

He was blown right out of the saddle. He was finished. They never heard from him again.

I took over the whole rest of the night. You know how it ended? Laying hands on Jews. Praying for them.

Giving invitation. Men were falling in the power of the spirit. Tremblings, weepings, like nothing you've ever... in a Jewish fraternity house by the power of God.

Hallelujah. You know how those meetings began? At the student union building. Where every day the philosophers come to hear some new thing.

The wise acres, the caustic critics, the hot shots. And they want to see who is this cats. So I had a great time of prayer with my Christian colleagues who had arranged the meetings.

And then as such times are, they have to end. And they faded away and there I was standing all alone before 300 foul-mouthed, fuming, agitators and radicals who had come to do me in even before this thing gets off the ground. We'll show him.

I could just see the guys hoisting their pants. And so I gave like a 15-20 minute talk. And as my custom was, I opened for questions and answers.

And right away there was a guy I knew he was going to be trouble. He was standing right directly in the line of my vision. Right by the wall with his arms folded over his chest and a smirk from ear to ear.

So much as I, I'll take care of this. Cats, he said. Do you believe in hell? Good thing I had my little memo book alphabetically arranged with notes on different subjects that I could turn to immediately.

I had never been asked that question. I had never even contemplated it. And I was on the spot.

I'm not just talking about personal human humiliation of failure before men. I'm talking about 7 days of meetings hanging in the balance where life and death is at stake. In one of those meetings where I was taken like a child.

I was blown out. I couldn't remember my name. My mind was dull.

My tongue was thick. I was weak. My legs.

Four to six meetings a day from student union building to dormitory to this building to that building to classrooms taken by the hand and just breathing prayers in the spirit from place to place and being fresh the very next moment that I was on. And in one of those meetings a guy walked in who was so crooked out a Vietnamese veteran so disillusioned so void and destitute so out of it. But as he walked through that room he was arrested.

And he sat down on the floor the place was packed out and he listened to me speak and then he heard the interaction the angry rebuttals and the shrieks and the howls that came from some of these people afterwards and he got up and he said what are you guys doing? Can't you see he said that God is here? An atheist. You know where that man is today? Well right now he's at Wheaton but he is the director of the entire French work of Youth with a Mission in Europe. And I'm speaking to you and here's the transcript of the messages given at Lausanne where their center is and where he's the director on apostolic foundations which I spoke because he's my buddy and because he opened the door to provide me a platform because he was saved at the University of Illinois when he staggered through a room and was arrested by the power of God coming out of foolishness and weakness which was the power of his resurrection life.

But getting back to that first meeting God said do you believe in hell? I said Lord you're on now. As I was trying to argue with one of my teachers this morning at the SEM and we're discussing 1 Corinthians Paul said that he has made unto us wisdom and I asked him I said when is that operative? Like when you come to the chapel with your own prepared sermon where you've rehearsed I didn't say that. Rehearsed before a mirror several times to make sure that it'll be flawless and pleasing to your colleagues if it happens also to please God that's incidental.

Or do you come like Paul in fear and trembling and in weakness to stand and to trust for a word that is given that comes down from above in the power of God that the faith of those who hear you might be established not in the wisdom of men but in the demonstration of the power and the spirit. That's dying. That's death.

For any academician and any theologian to stand before an audience of his colleagues and his students and to take that risk to stand before hundreds of outraged students and to take the risk of even opening for questions not knowing what they're going to ask and what are you the walking encyclopedia? You're only young in the faith yourself. I said God you're on and I meant it and I opened my mouth even as Arlene encouraged me tonight she said just open your mouth. You're right.

I opened my mouth you know what came out? I said something like as well as I can remember it Sir you're making light of hell but I want you to know that there's a figure in scripture who spoke convictingly about hell and spoke of a lake of fire spoke of an outer darkness that there will be a shriek and a howl and he's the same one who said that we will be held accountable for every idle word we speak. He himself never spoke one. I adjure you to take seriously the question you ask and the answer you're receiving lest you find yourself one day sooner than you think standing before him whom you are now publicly deriding together with his messenger too late to avail yourself of the answer and require now to suffer its eternal consequence.

How do you like that for a little spontaneous answer? A pastor who heard this story said to other pastors at a minister's meeting that man had the spirit of God without measure because he was one cent not speaking his own words. You know what happened to that wise acre? I literally watched the man go I watched the air go out he shriveled up he blew away. I mean as almost physically and then we were off for seven days of glory.

Souls falling left and right God sweeping through that place. What if men believed this? How would men live who believed that God has appointed a day in which he will judge? I'll tell you the world would be reformed overnight. Corrupt politicians and hot shot rock stars and everyone who's doing their thing and having a ball and taking their liberty would all of a sudden sober up in anticipation of a God who is soon coming who will judge.

Will judge. It's interesting that Paul should equate and speak in the same breath by that one whom he has raised from the dead. That the issue of resurrection somehow is implied in the issue of the judgment of God.

That somehow the two things go together. As a matter of fact all we need do is consider the condition of the church and recognize that virtually to the same degree to which the issue of God's judgment or God as judge has been lost to us to virtually that same degree we have little recognition or awareness of the reality of resurrection. Both have diminished in equal measure.

Both are in tandem and both are related as I hope to show you as I go on. The issue of judgment has fallen into disuse in about the same proportion as the resurrection in that it has not been attested by the church. Not fallen to the degree to which the doctrine has somehow been rejected.

It always is acknowledged. But the degree to which it has not been attested by the church. Shown forth, exhibited, demonstrated in its life.

Remember what Paul says in Ephesians 2 Unto him be glory in the church world without end throughout all ages by Christ Jesus. Did you ever notice that? Such a church is not going to be by us. It's not going to be by some program that we devise.

A glorious church is his masterpiece through us. Unto him be glory in the church world without end throughout all ages an eternal masterpiece by Christ Jesus. Now come on guys, face up, let's get honest or we're not going to get anywhere.

We're hardly better than my Jewish kinsmen when it comes to services, to conducting church business. Think of the synagogue and the temple today. Impressive in its liturgy, in its eloquent rabbis, in its quotations of scripture, in the employment of Hebrew, without the Spirit of God.

It's so impressive that numbers of Gentiles convert who come from Christian congregations more arid, more destitute, more foreboding and devoid of life than what they see culturally and sensuously and humanly in the synagogue and they opt for it. Religion can be practiced without God but not a church that's glorious. Apostolicity is eminently the issue of resurrection or nothing.

If we think that we can aspire to and move in the same reality as Paul without the power of the life that animated him, we of all men are most to be pitied. He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising him from the dead.

The issue of the resurrection is also the issue of the apocalypse. The same Jesus that was raised from the dead is the same one who by the same power is going to return to the earth. The resurrection was the first installment.

His coming is its glorious conclusion. If you can't believe the one, you can't expect the other. And that the one has come is also the proof that the eschatological end also will come because we have already the foretaste in the spirit.

We have already tasted of the age to come. The issue of resurrection is the issue of the apocalypse. It is the issue of God's judgment.

It is the issue of the day of the Lord. And the reason that the world has not believed it is because we have not demonstrated the first part of it, namely that he is risen. They see us in our offices, our places of business, and the other aspects of our life moving in the same natural strength, the natural wisdom, natural ability, human things by which they move, only we just employ a little different vocabulary.

Why was the confrontation in Mars Hill so profound? It's not only because the man spoke the right words, but because he expressed the right thing. And some said, we'll hear again of this matter, and others turned away, and Paul left. They not only heard the issue of judgment and the resurrection, they saw the man in whom it was incarnate.

And I'll tell you what, guys. How many times have you turned the pages of a popular magazine to see the familiar cartoon of some guy with a long beard and a cloak carrying a kind of a sandwich board or a sign that says, repent for the end of the ages at hand. Ha ha ha.

It's a joke. It's funny funny. It's a cutesy.

It will always get a giggle from the world because, frankly, there's no issue more calculated to expose the foolishness of the faithful than the issue of the proclamation of the day of the Lord being at hand. Think of it. Of all the things that you could speak to men, how would you like to speak of an imminent judgment soon to come in which no man is exempt? That is final, unalterable, irrevocable and eternal.

How would you like to speak that? If you're leaking anywhere, if your spiritual wife is shabby anywhere and inadequate, it will show you up. You'll be an object of derision and laughter. You'll occasion a giggle rather than conviction and solemnity and pause.

There's a reason why we have rightly avoided the issue of communicating to the world the fact that God will judge the world and has appointed a day by that man whom he has raised from the dead because we know that we do not have the spiritual authority to speak it. We cannot speak it persuasively and so we shrink from it and speak of lesser and other things. We cannot omit the judgment of God.

There are men that are hurtling to their doom virtually the whole world in such an ignorance of the things toward which all history is tending that when it comes with the suddenness like a thief in the night they will be caught unawares and their shriek will be unremitting throughout all eternity who are now hot shots and braggarts because they had never been instructed because they had never been confronted in the power of the resurrection of the issue of the day of the Lord and of judgment at hand. Not only is the issue of judgment and resurrection bound up in the economy of God but also in the sense that it's an issue so demanding so contrary to everything that's visible around us everything that placates us and assures us and soothes us that this is the best of all possible worlds and it will always go on and don't worry it will work out ok in the end science will give the answer that to break into that mindset with the apocalyptic view of God takes an uttermost of Holy Ghost power and conviction and it's our mandate and our responsibility. Paul said knowing the terror of God I persuade men.

Did he have a lopsided version of God? Did he have a jaundiced view? Is God's judgment some terrible aspect of his being and we really want to center on the more important attributes of God His love His mercy His kindness His goodness Oh silly Galatians who has beguiled you to let you think that God's judgment is any less an aspect an attribute of His being than His love or His mercy in fact come on put on your thinking cap what is His love and His mercy independent and unrelated to His judgment?

It becomes a sentimental sop unless we see it in the context of a God who judges in righteousness Him whom you ignorantly worship I declare unto you Paul said and he gave them the whole counsel of God he said before them God as He is and not as men would choose to have Him be a God who will judge and that judgment is redemptive and necessary in fact we ought to be groaning and aching for it even now when we see all about us a world that is so perverse so indifferent to God so thumbing its nose at God so doing its own thing so living in such disregard for the God who made this earth and gave it for men for their enjoyment and for their life that happily they might seek after Him if they might find Him that our spirits ought to be groaning out how long Lord? how long? how much longer do we have to pick up the St.

Paul newspaper and read who's been murdered now and what child has been abused now and how many kids have disappeared now and who's involved in child pornography now and what violent filthy practice is now going on how long? because every day it worsens and the victims mount up and we are like the Dutch kid with his finger in the dike hoping to hold back the flood with some social program when what the world needs is the coming of a judge in righteousness to set things right and to establish His way with men God's going to burn it all up Peter says the whole thing is going to just turn to a crisp it's going to melt with a fervent heat it's going to dissolve God's judgment is going to be total on everything that's unholy and even now He presently is shaking all things that can be shaken

that only that which cannot be shaken will remain will remain that fire should not come upon us we are already in the fire of His glory in the apostolic reality or we're getting there seeing these things Peter says what manner of men ought we to be in all holiness and blamelessness maybe I better let Peter say that and not paraphrase it therefore since all these things will be dissolved all these things that's the judgment what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness looking for and hasting the coming of the day of God because of which the heavens will be dissolved being on fire and the elements will melt with fervent heat nevertheless we according to His promise look for new heavens and a new earth in which dwelleth righteousness what manner of men ought we to be

in holy conduct and godliness looking for and hasting the coming of the day of God dum-da-dum-dum I thought it was a fixed chronological event and when September something turns out in the year 2000 bang

it falls it comes hasting looking for and hasting the day of the Lord hey do you know we have something to do with it our anticipation our expectancy our yearning our looking for Him to come as vindicating king to establish His righteousness has everything to do with the day of His coming a church that's asleep a church that's indifferent a church that is so ensconced in the world that enjoys it to such a degree that it doesn't want a melt a fervent heat to melt its hi-fi or lick at its wardrobe is not hasting the day of His appearing we can haste it that means so many fewer rapes child

molestations divorces, mayhem, murder and we thought church was coming to services we have an apocalyptic mandate we're involved in the consummating event in proportion to our faith which is expectancy looking for not looking for escape looking for Him how sick the church has become that it thinks that the rapture is escape that we'll be taken out and we'll burp our way up somewhere to the clouds where a harp is waiting while the judgments of God fall furiously on the earth I think parousia means parousia, however you pronounce the Greek word a meeting the king in the air so as to greet him and to bring him to the earth where he shall rule and reign and we with him it's not an escape looking for the Lord is only for lovers not for escapists got the picture? those who love Him not those

who want to escape with their bills unpaid and they can take out this mortgage and buy that car above their budget because they'll be lifted up just when it falls due there's no message more difficult to proclaim than the message of a soon coming judgment by a God who will judge the world and therefore it's not humanly possible to proclaim it out of well-meaning intention or religious obligation only by the resurrection or nothing we cannot offer it as an opinion it will bounce off men like the proverbial water off the duck's back it must come as burning conviction as an issue of eternal verity life and death that sounds awfully dogmatic God's going to judge? when I told this professor this morning that I have come in places of commitment in fear and trembling and much weakness that the

faith of those who hear me should not be established in the wisdom of men but in the power of the spirit and how God brought us to Bemidji State University after 10 days of fasting and prayer in the community 24 hours around the clock that was our first mandate from God hey, you've been to Uppsala? and you've been to Tubingen? and Harvard and Yale and Berkeley? how about Bemidji? you know, like Dinkiesville, right at your doorstep I had never thought about it and sure enough we went within a half hour God had opened the door, made the connections and we had three days of meetings complete humiliation, in the rain people missing us, avoiding us and it started in the student union building in the rain I said to these guys, my comrades from the community hey, direct these people into the

student union building no smoking section, we'll begin there and then they screamed 12 o'clock, 12-1, 2, 3 people were moving around going to the coffee machine, going to the sandwich no one was sitting down where's my audience? it was like speaking to the open air people not stopping 12-5, 12-6, 12-7 you know what I realized? there's a moment when you have to begin when you have to begin when you're responsible you know what the message was? the judgment of God that is imminent and at hand when I told that to my professor this morning you know what he said? he said, what are you trying to do? make men fearful? the gospel is something other syrupy, nice soothing to the ear pleasant to be considered this is the gospel this is the apocalyptic heart of it and it has been missing low all

these generations long and there's a God who is about restoring it through you if you're afraid of being called dogmatic intolerant narrow you can forget about being a pole for your generation separate unto me, God said in Acts 13 now you're understanding why? let's pray tonight I don't know what to pray Lord my God, open our hearts and our understandings roll back, my God, the veil may we see as Paul saw the

things that are imminent more imminent now than they were for him may we believe that you're still commanding all men everywhere to repent and Lord, we acknowledge we have been so removed from these realities so much taken up ourselves with the world so assured by its appearances that somehow it will always go on and it's the best of all possible worlds surely you're not going to

judge it? we have found our safety, our comfort in it and our closets testify to it and the space that we're renting where our closets overflow little wonder we're in no position to ascend the Mars hill and tell them that God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world by that one whom they despised whom they have blasphemed and impugned whom he has raised from the dead even Jesus Christ precious God fit us to be vessels of that resurrection life Lord, I don't care how talented and gifted we are teach us how to live by you even as you lived by the Father teach us my God to come with fear and trembling not in our own wisdom but in trust in the power and the spirit of God and the word that is given and will be given teach us to trust you by the life that was demonstrated that broke

forth from the dead that is not just for us doctrine but the awesome and abiding reality of our life especially in crisis and in extremity and in demand and need make us a resurrection people that we might be an apostolic people that we might proclaim the message of the end to those who are hurtling to their doom in complete ignorance and disdain sober us that we might sober them put this word in our spirits my God and burrow deeply with it Lord and work your work by it and empty us of vain things and postured things Lord our own idols and our own distractions that we might be a people who gird our loins to serve our God and our generation before the end comes faithfully may we look for that end joyously expectantly looking for him, our King and by so doing even haste the day and we'll

thank you and praise you for this precious calling and this glorious gospel and the power of my God to make it known in Jesus holy name God's people said Amen

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