

Arab-07 Martyrdom

by Art Katz

Art Katz's sermon emphasizes that true martyrdom is essential for the church to fulfill its divine purpose and demonstrate God's wisdom through suffering.

Duration: 57:29

Scripture: Acts 7:51, Acts 7:54-55

Topics: "Arabic"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the challenges faced by the church in overcoming historic prejudices and moving Israel to receive the Gospel. The speaker emphasizes the importance of a modern church that fulfills God's eternal purpose and demonstrates His wisdom to the principalities and powers. The sermon also highlights the sacrifice of Stephen, whose death played a critical role in the conversion of Saul to Paul. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the need for a church that reveals the glory of God and surrenders to His will.

Transcript

I wanted to say a little bit about martyrdom tonight. Not because it has an interest as something of a curious kind that has been historic or may happen to a few. But because I believe it is God's definitive and normative intent for all his church.

True church is martyr church. Whether or not it's required of us. It's not just something that happens to a few.

It may actually mark the difference between those who rule and reign with him in his thousand-year millennial rule and those who may sleep until its conclusion. And I agree with the principle that if we want to see something in its purest form, we need to look at where it was expressed first in the scripture. The truest picture of church is what it was at the first in the book of Acts.

And the truest picture of martyrdom is when it was experienced by Stephen in Acts chapter 7. So we need to examine this together. To understand what is the heart, the genius of martyrdom. God had me on a sabbatical silence that lasted 14 months in which he prohibited me from preaching at all.

That's a kind of a dying for a man who lives from his mouth. And he didn't tell me how long I would be forbidden to speak publicly. It could have been 14 years rather than 14 months.

But he broke it by having me speak for a first time on the mystery of Israel and the church in the last days. It was only a recent and new revelation for me. I didn't have it because I was Jewish.

I had it because it was given from above. Out of a long season of suffering and death. And I was called to a church in California to speak on this theme.

And I felt so strange having to speak for a first time in all of that long silence. There was a great air of expectation and excitement in the room. I knew that my words would be significant for the church and for Israel.

And who is sufficient for these things. I could not even tell them to what chapter to turn. I said turn to Romans 9 through 11.

And I just began. And when I finished the first night, the Lord had raised the question. What kind of a church will move Israel to jealousy? This is a critical question that Paul raises in Romans 11.

Have they stumbled that they should fall? Should they be permanently out of the purpose of God? God forbid you should think that, he says. But through their fall, salvation has come to the Gentiles. We knew that.

But that's not the end of the statement. So as to move them to jealousy. There is a purpose for our conversion for them.

That they might be grafted in again, for God is able to graft them in. Because Israel was planted. Someone called me.

By renewing us as a nation. And our presence in the church. Will make Israel change and return to the Lord.

What kind of church can succeed in this? These are violent terms for any Jew to consider. How can a church overcome all of these historic prejudices? What can it demonstrate that it can move Israel to a jealousy? To receive the gospel that its fathers have been enemies against? I raised the question but I didn't have the answer. And I went on for six days speaking on these themes.

And it came to six messages rather. The seventh and the final message was on a Sunday morning. I went to bed Saturday night without the final message.

And the Lord woke me at three o'clock in the morning with one word. Martyrdom. And my final message was this.

The church that will move Israel to jealousy is a martyr church. That's also the same church that fulfills the eternal purpose of God. In demonstrating the manifold wisdom of God to the principalities and powers.

That's also the same church that fulfills the eternal purpose of God. In demonstrating the manifold wisdom of God to the principalities and powers. For the willingness to give up one's life for another is the wisdom of God.

For the willingness to give up one's life for another is the wisdom of God. It is totally opposite to the wisdom of this world. That says avoid suffering and pursue pleasure.

Take care of yourself first. Even in our American Declaration of Independence it says The pursuit of happiness. These are the self-evident truths of this world.

The unquestioned premises that make this world's wisdom. But God says that he created all things in order that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might be demonstrated. But God says that he created all things in order that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might be demonstrated.

And I wonder if you have seen glimpses of this in the things that pertain to the last days in the book of Revelation. I never hear it preached. Revelation 13, verses 6 and 7, shows the triumphal success of the Antichrist, the beast.

Who is able to make war with him? And it says in the end of verse 4, he openly blasphemes God in verse 6, his name and his tabernacle and then doth dwell in heaven. This is the final triumph of everything that is opposed to God. And it was given to this beast to make war with the saints in verse 7, and to overcome them.

That's a strange victory. That God allows his church to be overcome by the power of the beast. And we won't take the time to look at it tonight.

I'll give you the scriptures, you can look at it at your own convenience. Daniel 7, 21 and 25. It says that he wears out the saints, he overcomes the saints, as if somehow this is the strategy of God.

We have thought in completely different terms. That we overcome by triumphing, rather than by suffering. But that is not the wisdom of God, that's the wisdom of the world.

Jesus demonstrated the wisdom of God at the cross. The wisdom of the world was violence, threat, power. The wisdom of God was patience, suffering and forgiveness, even unto death.

And out of that came the triumph. That made the powers of darkness an open spectacle and disarmed them. For the fear of death could not intimidate Jesus.

He suffered the worst that they could inflict. And did not respond in kind. But showed the character of God in the extremity of his suffering.

For crisis reveals and absolute crisis reveals absolutely. Absolute crisis reveals what? Absolutely. Crisis reveals and absolute crisis reveals absolutely.

It reveals what we really are. Not when we are at our religious best, well fed and comfortable and in the company of the saints. But when we are stretched out to breaking and forsaken by all.

And even sensing the forsaking of God. My God, my God, why have thou forsaken me? Why don't I feel your presence? Why are you so far from my crying? That suffering is the worst suffering. That's what Lazarus had to experience when he suffered sickness unto death.

And died without an explanation. Not knowing he was going to be resurrected again. When it comes, it will come suddenly.

That's why martyrdom cannot be what we summon in a final moment. It's not some extraordinary courage that we are going to find for a final moment. It's what we are consistently in all of our moments.

What we exhibit in that final moment is the statement of what we have been in all of our moments. So the way of martyrdom is a way of life and not of death. For the overcomer is one who does not count his life as dear unto himself.

At any time. And he counts the spoiling of his goods as joy. His life is not his own.

And his death more glorifies God than his living. He is equally as glad to give his life as to keep it. To come to a place like that is to live without fear at any time.

Was it wise for us to come to Egypt at this time? To Heliopolis? My wife called yesterday and said that the telephone was coming off the hook. People were calling to find out what happened to us in Egypt. Everybody knows that an earthquake is often followed by a second disturbance.

Often worse than the first. It did not so much as enter our thought that we should in any way cancel our coming. That we should be mindful for our safety.

That we should be afraid to take a bus because some terrorists had shot up a bus some time ago. Death where is thy sting then? Grave where is thy terror? As I told one of our brothers here the other night, Jesus said to Pontius Pilate, you could do nothing against me except it were given you from above. Nothing can cut my life short.

Until every purpose of God has been fulfilled for it. And if it pleases him in that final moment to take it by violence of one form or another. Then I will be privileged to wear the modest crown.

It is not some grim thing that I have to fear. It is a privilege calling to which I rejoice. And I frankly do not expect to end my life in bed.

And it may well be ended at the hands of even my own people. And that was the case with Stephen. Whose face shone like an angel.

And I want to tell you, you want to avoid that condition. When your face starts shining like an angel. It will not be long before the darkness will seek to put it out.

You don't want to go on from faith to faith and from glory to glory. You don't want to embrace the ultimate purposes of God. You don't want to be to Israel the extension of God's mercy.

It is guaranteed to make your face shine. And you won't even know it. I am a privileged man because I know of an entire community of believers that were martyred in Africa.

I have visited their community in a remote place in Zimbabwe. That was an area that was infested by radical racists and Marxist blacks. These are a people who never armed themselves.

They trusted God entirely for their safety. I was in correspondence with one of their young mothers. And she was the victim along with her child and 15 others of this sudden massacre that came.

I have been back there to see their burned out buildings. These radical blacks came in the middle of the night. And in order to avoid detection by the firing of bullets, they hacked them to death with an axe.

They went with their hands tied with barbed wire behind their backs into a building and one at a time they were hacked to death. I spoke with the black man who was saved from their death, who witnessed that

night. He said, Art, you can hear the thumping of the axe through the night.

But not one scream, one howl, one plea for one's life. Only two children survived. One is 15 years old today and seeing a psychiatrist.

Because she was holding the baby of the mother that I knew, and the baby was taken out of her arms and flung against the wall and crushed. They were doing wonderful work in that area. They were really lifting up the whole economy of a very depressed African area.

They were introducing fishponds and methods of agriculture. Irrigation. And they were suddenly taken out of there.

What a terrible waste. Why hadn't they been allowed to continue their good works? But more was performed in their dying than their living. Because they died without complaint.

They didn't say, how come me? Why me? And look at the good works we're doing. They had a sublime and complete total confidence in the sovereignty of God. If God required their life, so be it.

So when I came two years later, I stayed in the home of a Jewish doctor in Johannesburg, South Africa. Whose Christian wife was related to about four or five people who had died in that massacre. He said, but after he got converted, he tried to witness to me as a Jew.

His friend was converted who died as a martyr and who had witnessed to him after his conversion. And he was irritated by this attempt to convert him. He said, but toward the end, he said, Art, there was such a change in these people.

He said, there was a visible light in their faces. And they spoke to me and witnessed to me in another way. And I immediately thought of Stephen, whose face also shone as an angel, who was full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.

And was confronted by the authorities in the great chapter seven of the book of Acts. And spoke to them the words of God by the Spirit. Without thought of what the consequence would be for himself.

He cried out, as your fathers did, so do you also. You always grieve the Holy Ghost. As your fathers did, so do you also.

Verse 5, Acts 7, 5. Verse 5, 51, that's right. 51 of chapter 7. Verse 54, when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart and they gnashed on him with their teeth. Verse 54, when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. He was an eschatological saint. He always saw the glory of the end, just like Paul, in such a way as to make his present suffering momentary and light.

Just like Paul, in such a way as to make his present suffering momentary and light. It was not what he saw in a final moment. It was his characteristic seeing always.

It was not what he saw in a final moment. It was his characteristic seeing always. Being full of the Holy Spirit, seeing an open heaven, the glory of God and Jesus at the right hand of the Father.

When you see that, when you see Jesus at the right hand of the Father, at the place of the throne, at the place of authority, whether you are hacked to death at night with an axe, or stoned to death in the daytime, you know that it's because he who stands at the right hand of the Father has determined it. And you can receive whatever comes from his hand, because it will always pertain to his glory. It enabled him to die more gloriously than Paul was ever able to live as a Pharisee.

It enabled him to die more gloriously than Paul was ever able to live as a Pharisee. Paul is the Hebrew of the Hebrews. Paul is the Hebrew of the Hebrews.

The ultimate religious Pharisee. The prized student of the Rabbi Gamaliel. And the man who is dying is only a busboy, a waiter on tables.

He doesn't have Paul's credentials. He doesn't have Paul's advantages. But something is exhibited in his dying that Paul had ever seen or ever can see or will see in Judaism.

It's the same thing that the centurion saw at the cross with Jesus. It's the same thing that the centurion saw at the cross with Jesus. He had seen many men die on crosses.

And they spat out blasphemies and obscenities and they shrieked and they complained and they were foul-mouthed and they died wretchedly. But the way this man died lay not their sin to their charge with a forgiving spirit, with a gracious spirit, with a meek spirit in the midst of suffering. It says that he gave himself as a sacrifice without spot by the eternal spirit.

It was not heroism. It was by the eternal spirit of God that Jesus gave himself a sacrifice without spot. Stephen was full of the same spirit.

What is the nature of the eternal spirit of God? It is the character of God. It is what He is in Himself. It's the spirit of self-sacrifice.

My house shall be a house of sacrifice. To reveal that spirit in the moment of extremity is to reveal God. And that is meant thinking to be but as He in fact really is.

That's why that centurion cried out, Truly, this is the Son of God. He was a dumb centurion, a gentile, a professional murderer. But something was revealed in the extremity of suffering that he could not deny.

Truly, this is the Son of God. Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born again of God. It was a revelation unto salvation.

And God is going to call for it one more time. There will be a body on the cross again who gives itself willingly. But it will not be a centurion watching.

It will be the nation of Israel who have not believed, who have denied Christ, who have been the enemies of the Gospel for your sake. But when they see this demonstration, in that final moment, they will say, Truly, this is the Son of God. This was critical for the conversion of Saul to Paul.

It required the sacrifice of God's choicest servant, Stephen. He had to decrease that Saul might increase. That the enemy of God should become the servant of God.

That the destroyer of the church should become the servant of the church. And nothing less than this revelation could do it. It required his life.

And Saul was never able to forget it. When Jesus confronted him on the road to Damascus, and with a blinding light, Saul, why do you kick against the prince? Jesus said to him, Why do you kick against the prince? You can't get this out of your spirit. You can't forget the way this man died.

When you thought to be an enemy of your faith. But he exhibited something in his suffering and his dying. That was the truest revelation of God.

And when he cried out, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. It says that he fell asleep. He fell asleep or he surrendered.

After he cried out, it says that he fell asleep in the last verse of chapter 7. And when he had said this, he fell asleep. When Christ comes, those that are asleep in Christ rise first. And those that are alive and remain rise after them.

It says those that remain means those that are barely alive, just barely surviving. From the anti-Christ persecutions of the last days. From the fake Christ or the liar, from the persecution of the liar Christ in the last days.

A martyr church that reveals the glory of God. And when he cried out and said this, he fell asleep. The purpose of his life and his being was completed.

There was no point to continue. He had no desire to retain his earthly life. For his purpose always was to fulfill the purpose of God.

That God might be glorified in him. In his living or in his dying. I think we're moving toward this conclusion.

What kind of a church will move Israel to jealousy? A martyr church. What is the church that demonstrates the manifold wisdom of God? A martyr church. For that is the manifold wisdom of God.

The powers of darkness cannot bear it. If they had known, they would not have crucified the Son of the Lord. For in his being subjected to their death, he overcame them.

In the character of God. With meekness and with humility. Without complaint and without fear.

As offering a fragrant sacrifice to the Father. So I want to pray for the church in Egypt. And for your own dear heads.

That may one day have to shed blood. All the more if you embrace that people that God will send into your midst. You'll make yourself a candidate for dying.

But how did God begin these days? He said in Isaiah 19, there will be an altar in Egypt and the rest of the world. An altar of sacrifice. And out of which Egypt shall become my people.

And as a result of this altar, Egypt shall become my people. In Isaiah 19, In that day there shall be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt. Verse 20, and it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt.

For they shall cry unto the Lord because of their trespasses. And he shall send a savior, a great one, and he shall deliver them. The end of verse 20.

He shall send them a savior, a great one. And the Lord shall be known to Egypt. The Lord shall be revealed to Egypt.

Only by the altar that is in the midst of the land. Which is a sign and a witness. Exactly the word for martyr.

And the Lord shall be known in Egypt. And the Egyptians shall know the Lord in Egypt. It's a voluntary thing.

It's not required. We do not have to be Christians of this ultimate kind. But for those who will, there's a crime.

An eternal crown of glory. That's a privilege. For as many as will.

And when God hears your heart. He is released to bring into your life and into your circumstances those things that fit you to be a Stephen for your generation. I think Stephen's final sainthood was prepared by the widows of the Greeks and the Hebrews.

Stephen's final sainthood was prepared by the widows of the Greeks and the Hebrews. That's why he was appointed to wait on the tables. Because there was so much bickering and fighting and divisiveness and jealousy about who's getting this and who's getting that.

And he had daily to function in the midst of that. The ordinary, the trials, the tensions, the irritations of the daily conflicts was the very thing out of which God shaped the modern life. And he can shape us out of the same.

The frictions, the trials, and the demands of the everyday. I used to joke and say, until persecution comes from outside, I'm suffering enough of it from within my own family. From within my own marriage.

From within my own circumstances. God has ways to fit us for the crown. Once we transact with him, that we are a people for his eternal purpose.

We sign up for martyrdom. It will reveal the God of Israel to Israel, and that same God to Egypt. Nothing less will.

We just need to understand. The true church is martyrdom. Always has been.

Always has been. And must, most certainly must be. At the end.

Will you be in that number? Let's tell the Lord. Thank you Jesus. Precious God.

We would count it a privilege. That we might offer a sacrifice to you. In the land.

And we invite you to prepare us for that day. As a people who are without complaint. Do not see ourselves as victims.

That we have to suffer unhappy circumstances. We trust the Jesus who is at the right hand of the Father. Whether our persecution has come to us as Palestinians.

Or under our own roofs by unbelieving families. By spouses that are opposed to us. We receive it with joy.

Let your light shine. In our faces. That they may meet you through us in the wilderness Lord.

As you spoke. You said I will meet with them face to face. Let it be this face that they see.
Not the face of religious obligation. Or self pity. Why me? How come me? But the face of joy.
The privilege to share the sufferings of Christ. In the final acts of God. That conclude the age.
And reveal him to the nations. Even this nation. And that nation.
In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/23/SID23351.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/art-katz/arab-07-martyrdom/>

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