

# Art's Testimony - Part 4

by Art Katz

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*Art Katz shares his transformative journey from skepticism to faith through a profound encounter with the New Testament and the character of Jesus.*

**Duration:** 8:43

**Scripture:** John 8:1-11, John 14:6, Acts 9:1-22, Romans 1:16, Philippians 3:7-8

**Topics:** "Personal Testimony", "Divine Salvation"

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## Description

This sermon recounts a personal journey of encountering the New Testament, initially rejected but later embraced, leading to a profound revelation of divine wisdom and the recognition of Jesus as God. The speaker grapples with the cost of accepting this truth, facing rejection and loss, yet ultimately finding salvation and a transformative faith in Jesus after a persistent pursuit by God.

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## Transcript

It was the symbol of all that was central to my humanistic assumptions of life, with man as its center, man as the measure of all things, know thyself. Now I was going to pay homage to the place from which the life source that has sustained me for so long had issued, and on a Greek ship yet, but as a deck passenger, the cheapest way to go. And on that ship I met a Jewish fellow passenger from New York who had a copy of the pocket edition of the New Testament given him on the waterfront.

The very same book which I had rejected at the age of 16 when I was waiting for my maritime papers to make my first trip as a merchant seaman when someone came up with big sheep eyes to induce me to take a New Testament and whom I radically rejected with contempt and directed him to the Museum of Natural History where he would find all the evidence that he needed to make his belief in God a non-belief. Now for the second time that same book was being offered me to a Jewish fellow passenger. But now I was prepared to read it because this was the source from which those people who had been picking me up off the side of the road were quoting me and was the basis of their conviction and belief of God.

And so I was curious to read it. And I'll never forget sitting on that deck below with the well-paying passengers, having a ball, and we poor characters on top living on the surface of the ship and by the light issuing from their porthole I began the reading of the New Testament. And as a student of the word, trained in the analysis of documents, a history teacher, I realized I'm reading an unusual document.

There's something about it that transcends even that which is human. I couldn't quite identify it, and the description of this Jesus was altogether other than the stereotypical Jesus that had been represented to me of non-relevance as a Jew in my earlier years. This was a compelling figure.

And he was allowing Jews to fall at his feet and worship and cry out, My Lord and my God, and not condemn them. I thought, well, either this man is a megalomaniac, he has delusions of grandeur about himself, or what he's saying is true. And so I was caught into a crisis of confrontation with the Jesus of the book.

And I came to a place in that book, in the Gospel of John, where my new hero was caught in the act of a woman taken in the act of adultery and confronted by his accusers with this woman saying, You have said that you've come to fulfill the law and not to destroy it, but this woman has been taken in the act of adultery and deserves the judgment of the law which is stoning. What do you say? When I read that, my heart sank because I thought, well, what could he say? He was caught in a terrible predicament or contradiction for which there's no patent human answer. I gave it my best shot.

I held my finger in the book with my sweaty palm because my heart was pounding. I realized I'm identified with this woman. I deserve what she deserves.

I didn't realize that before until I was caught in the framework of that episode. I don't know, something about the setting of being on the deck of a ship as a poor passenger, the reality of that, as a book designed for the poor, for the rejects, for the lost, made that book so commendable, so penetrating. And so when I finally despaired that there could be any answer, I, with trembling hands, opened the book to read.

What can my new hero say? He's finished. Another call marks down the drain. Another sign for he's gone.

And Jesus looked up, having poked in the dirt at his accusers, and said, let him who is without sin cast the first stone. I can't tell you the impact, the effect of that one statement. I had never read the scriptures before.

Though commending students to go to the source, I had never gone to the source. When I read that line, it came up off the page. It smoked my eyes.

It penetrated my being. It cleaved me in two. I was trembling like a leaf.

It was the power of revelation. And I knew and I knew in that one moment with that statement that this was not a human statement. This is divine wisdom.

This is beyond man. This is beyond anything that man can say or do. This is God.

And I knew therefore there is a God. I'm reading his book. I don't know how he could preserve the integrity of it in 2,000 years, and therefore the Jesus of that book is who he claims to be.

I was astonished, but I did not cry out, hallelujah, because as I've shared, I was immediately made to realize this is a costly revelation. This will cost you everything, Katz. Your mother will be killed by this.

Your Jewish friends and your intellectual friends will reject you. Your status, your stature, your recognition will be entirely lost. You'll be a fool of fools to say yes to this revelation, and I could not bring myself to affirm it.

I knew it to be true, lover of truth, and yet I could not surrender that truth because I knew that its cost was too great. But the God of that revelation patiently pursued me for many months after until he had obtained my confession, having passed through Egypt and come into Israel and finally into that bookstore in which he called me by name and allowed me the grace to call upon him by name and to obtain the salvation that is indescribably glorious and that I've enjoyed now for this past 37 years. And then finally going through Israel, where the Lord himself concluded his pursuit of me by allowing me to come lost into a bookstore in Jerusalem on my way to visit some Orthodox Jewish community, and I'm finding myself on the wrong bus, walking into the first store that I could find and receiving lovely directions by a gracious Jewish woman, and just about to leave, I notice I'm in a bookstore, and they're selling Bibles and Christian commentaries, and I looked again at this woman's Yiddish eponym, her Jewish face, I said, excuse me, what is this place? Oh, she said quite innocently, this is our bookstore adjoining our chapel.

We are a congregation of Jewish believers in the Messiah, Jesus. When I heard that, I freaked out. I didn't know it was a congregation.

I thought I was the only Jew upon whose neck Jesus had breathed. And the moment that she said that, I heard the voice of the Lord calling me by name and commanding me not to leave. I stayed, I obeyed the voice of him with whom I have to do, not having submitted to any authority in my then 35 years.

On earth I was a rebel from birth, but when I heard the voice of him with whom I have to do, he said, Art, you are not to leave. No explanation, just a commandment. I remained four days with these Pentecostal Jews in the assemblies of God work in Jerusalem and where they were tutoring me in the scriptures and showing me God's plan of salvation and the Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in the new, and I, the intellectualist and student of history, was unable in the power of my intellect to understand.

I went to sleep on the fourth and final night, completely perplexed, how could God ask me, a Jew, to become a Christian? This will kill my mother! And in my sleep, when my mind was inoperative, which was the obstruction, the Lord, by his Spirit, put into my heart an understanding, and I awoke on May 26, 1964, believing. I came to the breakfast table and I said to this precious Jewish woman with whom I'm still in contact, 38 years later, Rina, I believe I understand. And the dear soul fell out of her chair, on the floor weeping for her prayer the night before I learned, was, Lord, we've done everything for this stubborn man, you make him to understand.

And so, having the measure of understanding that I did, not complete, but sufficient, she encouraged me to call upon the name of the Lord. For me to take the name of Jesus to my lips was, I can't tell you, an ultimate requirement. I had been so poisoned against that name, I could not speak it peaceably.

And everything seemed to converge against that name, in that moment. You'll be a traitor to your people.

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