

Ask for the Ancient Paths

by Art Katz

The sermon encourages listeners to seek the original and primary way of God, uncorrupted by human traditions and derivatives, in order to find rest for their souls.

Scripture: Proverbs 8:22-30, Proverbs 8:32-36, Jeremiah 6:16, Matthew 11:28, John 14:6

Topics: "Seeking God", "Ancient Paths"

Description

Art Katz emphasizes the importance of seeking the 'ancient paths' as a means to find true rest for our souls, drawing from the timeless lament of the prophet Jeremiah. He highlights the crossroads we face today, urging listeners to stop, look, ask, and walk in the good way that leads to life. Katz reflects on the significance of the 'ancient' in relation to God, suggesting that the true paths have become obscured by modern distractions. He calls for a return to the foundational truths of faith, reminding us that the figure who embodies these ancient paths is Christ, who invites the weary to find rest in Him. The sermon serves as a poignant reminder of the blessings that come from heeding God's wisdom and the dangers of neglecting it.

Transcript

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Thus says the Lord: "Stand at the crossroads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls." But they said, "We will not walk in it." (Jeremiah 6:16).

The pleading, haunting cry of the prophet is timeless. It is as valid now as then. So long as the condition remains to which the God addresses His ancient people, so also the appeal and the lament.

Anyone whose heart aches for the Jew - and for the nation Israel - recognizes that, indeed, we are at a crossroad. The text is in the plural "crossroads" and the sages rightly suggest that this means the intersection between good and evil. If only we would stop; if only we would look; if only we would ask; if only we would walk in the good way.

I love the word 'ancient.' Somehow it suggests to me something older than rabbinic Judaism, the sages, cabbalism, and everything else that is derivative and not primary. Can we not go back to the Ancient of Days Himself? The ancient paths, I fear, are overgrown and concealed by weeds. If we had found those paths, we would also have found rest for our souls. Our present condition, wherever we are in the world with its ominous, fearful clouds overhead, indicates that we have not found that rest.

We continue to despise that Figure who dares to announce, "I am the way...Come unto Me you who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Did He not know Jeremiah's cry? Was He not also the Lord, the God of Jacob, who sent Him? Dare He be its fulfillment? How ancient is He who said "before Abraham was, I Am."

I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills were brought forth: While as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens, I was there: when He set a compass upon the face of the deep...when He appointed the foundation of the earth: then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him...(Proverbs 8:22-30).

Whoever the mysterious figure is described here, he concludes with a charge that we ought not to ignore:

Now therefore, O sons, listen to me, for blessed are they who keep my ways. Heed instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. Blessed is the man who listens to me...for he who finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord. But he who sins against me injures himself; all those who hate me love death. (Proverbs 8:32-36).

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