

Beyond Categories

by Art Katz

Art Katz's sermon emphasizes the necessity of abandoning our limited understanding to fully embrace God's will and perspective in times of crisis.

Duration: 1:18:43

Scripture: Genesis 22:18, Psalm 73:17, Psalm 84:10, Psalm 116:16, Matthew 11:28, John 10:27, John 14:6

Topics: "Truth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of seeking a deeper understanding of God and His truth. He highlights the need to move beyond our current understanding and beliefs in order to grasp a greater apprehension of God. The speaker uses the example of Moses entering the cloud on Mount Sinai to illustrate the willingness to go to great lengths to obtain a true knowledge of God. The sermon also discusses the significance of the ultimate reality and how it can bring about a change in our perception of reality. Additionally, the speaker addresses the question of why the Jewish people have experienced multiple expulsions throughout history and suggests that they will only truly learn the lesson when they receive a prophetic explanation that the church has not been able to communicate to them.

Transcript

Unless you, the great author and the finisher of our faith, the great shepherd of our faith, will lead us, my God, through the tumult and even confusion and tension of these days into green pastures and still waters by which we may dwell. So we're asking, Lord, again, unashamedly, in our characteristic way, that your word would become an event. Surely it's called for.

The hour and the tension and the crisis to which we have been brought calls for a word of such a kind that if it is to give answer to the crisis that has been brought, it must itself become an event, not for us only, but beyond us and through us, to the greater church at large, and ultimately to the Jewish community, to Israel itself. So, my God, who is sufficient for these things? How better do we understand Paul, continually palpitating and continually crying out that repeated cry, Paul, giant that he was, who is sufficient for these things? And we thank you, Lord, to be called to such a faith for which we always will make that cry. It is ever and always beyond us, exceeds our understanding, exceeds our ability.

It stretches us by God to breaking. It compels us to come into such a place in the knowledge of you that we would not even have thought to sort, let alone think to find, if you had given us a manageable religion that we could perform out of our own well-meaning intention and ability. We thank you for a salvation to

the uttermost that brings us beyond that pathetic and inadequate place into the ultimate place with the Lord himself.

Oh, Lord, precious God, may we hear your voice today. May we hear the words of your speaking beyond time, now word, Lord. I may then be rejoicing in heaven for the proclamation of it as event that has come in time and place into this earth.

I will not return to you void, but accomplish every purpose we're on through this. Thank you, Lord, for the privilege of gathering this congregation to the historic moment, open our hearts and our understanding and give us such an acuity of hearing and receiving, my God, as it has exceeded all past experience till now. For such a word requires it.

And once we come to that acuteness, shall we ever go back to where we were before? We're stretched and we're stretched permanently. And we thank you, Lord. We desire that.

We need that. We ask that. We thank you, give you the praise for this morning and this day.

Come gratify your own soul. Have not as Lord, as the Jews say, have satisfaction in your own soul, fell and bubble over. Let your cup run over Lord with the joy.

As you look upon your inheritance, who are coming now within view to the thing for which you have given all, even your son to obtain. We bless you. We give you praise.

Receive our gratitude now, Lord. If this were the whole service, we give you gratitude and joy. We thank you for our so great privilege.

In Yeshua's holy name we pray. God's people said, Amen. Dissolve anything and everything that stands between us and between you.

However correct it might be in itself and however cherished, if it constitutes any kind of an obstruction to the totality of union with you, who alone is God, we invite that dissolving. That itself would be a great grace. So we bless you, Lord.

Come from first word to last word and lead us in the things that are upon your heart this morning for all the church. We bless you, Lord. Great grace indeed in Yeshua's holy name.

Wonderful grace. So the Lord is looking for a virginal firstfruits company that will follow the lamb wither so ever he goeth. And I think that that wither so ever is going in the last days to bring us to places where we could never have imagined and where we ourselves would balk.

Something like Peter saying, let this be far from you, Lord. That would have obtained for Peter the man of the year award as being a statement of such remarkable generosity and breadth of spirit and compassion for his master. And yet it would have impeded the cross.

Let it be far from you, John the Baptist, of whom Jesus said there's no greater. I have need to be baptized of you. He had to be persuaded to perform the wither so ever of Jesus, to baptize one who patently had no need of repentance that it might fulfill all righteousness.

This wither so ever is so remarkable. It requires an uttermost abandon from that virginal company in order to follow him. And today's selection in Oswald Chambers is exactly on that question, who raises the

question, have I ever yielded an absolute submission to Jesus Christ? We would instantly answer, of course, we have ever been yielded, but there's an absolute and an ultimate abandonment, which is total.

But I think few of us know what all of us have been called to in such an hour as this. The word abandon, when you look up in the dictionary, you'll find dimensions of meaning that are always a surprise. To give up the intent of never again claiming one's right or interest, to give over and surrender completely to any attempt at self-control, quit, relinquish, renounce, vacate, resign, discard, forswear, forsake, abandon, denotes the absolute giving up of an object.

It's surrender to the mercy of something or someone else greater. Wouldn't it be remarkable if the object that needs finally to be given up is not some carnal thing, but a spiritual thing, a correct thing, and a thing about the Lord himself? And the thing about the Lord is so cherished that we will not relinquish it for the Lord himself. That's the ultimate irony of the last impediment that stands between ourselves and him to be that bridal company that follows him in the river soever that he goeth.

It's not the wrong thing, it's the correct thing, and a cherished thing. And because it is, it is for that reason most difficult to forsake or to abandon. Whether to give up or to abandon or to yield, carnal or material things are no sacrifice at all.

But the abandonment for which the Lord waits is clearly a sacrifice. So the desire for or the interest in or the protection of that which is correct, even the desire to be right, the enjoyment of rectitude, the wonderful feeling of being really lined up with God, strangely and ironically can be that impediment that that itself needs to be forsaken. But it's remarkable how few will.

And maybe it's for that reason that Jesus' murder was inevitable, not by the apparently wicked or evil, but the best of Israeli society and religious life, because he seemed to constitute a threat to what they held to be as correct. And they must defend it in such a way as to crucify the Lord himself who gave the truths which they cherish and defend. Saul is the wonderful example of that.

In his zeal to protect the faith of Israel, being inviolate from what appeared to be a dangerous heretical sect, that he found himself persecuting the Lord himself in the name of his own zeal. Maybe that's the ultimate thing to which the candidate for apostolicity must come, that he recognizes in the last analysis, the very zeal to protect and to defend is the very thing that will ultimately persecute and crucify the Lord afresh. So we must have no vested interest, even in our correctness, that the Lord has always, because he's Lord, to be allowed the privilege of leading us where he will and contradicting our categories.

And perhaps he'll test us in just those areas. And perhaps what is going on now with us is that test. Is the Lord of the Lord, unless we allow him the right to set aside his own categories, to alter his own truths as we understand them, to bring a new dimension of something that seems to threaten that which is and is established and given of him even, is he really the Lord unless he has that prerogative and that right in our sight to bring anything of his own choosing that seems even to contradict himself.

We're not abandoned until we have abandoned ourselves to that. So there's no category so sacrosanct that the Lord cannot alter if he's to be Lord and the Lamb of God whom we follow with us wherever he goeth. And the last and deadliest hiding place of self is not in our carnality, but as I so often say, in our spirituality.

And until we recognize that and are open to be dealt with in that place, we will oppose the God, the Lord, even in defending him. The thing that killed him at the first will kill him again. The zealous intent of defenders of the faith to protect the faith from seeming danger or onslaught of prospective heresy.

And the great paradox is that in the last days, the potential for heresy is never more evident than now. So how do we abandon and yet defend? It is a remarkable quandary of an ultimate kind, and it's these ultimate brain-breaking quandaries that break us into a dimension of God that we would not be required to find or to enter, and that the psalmist in Psalm 73 has been compelled to discover. And that's my text for this morning.

I mentioned it yesterday briefly, but it is one of the great psalms that touches this ultimate quandary, and that is the experience of a psalmist, sweet singer of Israel. It may not be David in person, there are others who have contributed to the psalms, but they all share the Davidic mindset, the Davidic heart, the Davidic spirit, the Davidic intensity for God. And that is the fulcrum of their quandary and their perplexity.

If they were more casual about their faith, they would not be forced into these ultimate perplexities and tensions. It's the very devotion that brings it to them. But the fact that something had to happen to the psalmist to break him into a dimension he had not known before shows that however exceptional a saint, however great the devotion, there was a realm that was not yet in his experience that he could only enter by virtue of the quandary, the perplexity, the confusion, the vexation that came to him and brought him to that frontier.

So let's look at this. We can't read it all, we can't take the time to read it all. If you do it, you'll read of a man who is described as upright, and it describes God as upright for those who are pure in heart.

And we believe and assume that the psalmist has that heart. And yet, as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped, for I was envious of the arrogant that I saw the prosperity of the wicked. Their bodies are sound and sleek, they are not in trouble as others are, they are not plagued like other people, therefore pride is their necklace, violence covers them like a garment, their eyes swell out with fatness, their hearts overflow with follies.

They scoff and speak with malice, with complete disregard for harming God or injuring his name or his reputation as if he's non-existent. And they prosper in that. Their hearts overflow with follies, they scoff and speak with malice.

There's no reticence to express themselves, and they're prospering in all of that, that is apparent contradiction to God. And the psalmist is bugged out, he's vexed beyond all speaking. Where is the righteous God, who does not cut these men down right on the spot and allows them to profane and bandy his name about in filthy jesting and disrespect and disregard? They speak with malice, lawfully they threaten oppression, they set their mouths against heaven.

Imagine the audacity of that, and their tongues range over the earth, and God does not shut them up. How then can he be righteous? How can he be God? Where's his power? Where is his jealousy for his name? Where's his honor? Doesn't he know he's being discredited and defamed and therefore deprecated and diminished in the eyes of all the world? The poor psalmist is beside himself with ultimate vexation for the failure of God to be God. His every category of understanding is being stretched agonizingly to breaking.

And the people praise these characters in verse 10 and find no fault in them. They're celebrated, they're given places of distinction, they're called the men of the year, they win all kinds of awards, and they're looked upon as even being religious and successful. If a holy man will be galled, it will be galled by that.

These phony apostles, taking to themselves such labels and such titles, and merchandising and franchising the world as if they have a mandate from God, when they are so apparent a contradiction to the very heart of what apostolic is, and they're getting away with murder. And the flocks, they run in great mobs to these men and to these prophets to hear a word from the great oracle and all of that, and you want to spit your guts out. Is the whole world deceived? Where's the church? Where's their discernment? Where's God? And they say, how can God know? Is their knowledge in the most high? They dismiss even the prospect that God can see and know and understand what they're pulling off.

Such are the wicked, always at ease, they increase in riches. And in vain, as for me, I've kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence, yet all day long I have been plagued and I'm punished every morning. Hey, what kind of universe is this? Where is the righteousness of God and his creation? That the evil and the wicked, the malicious, the foul-mouthed, the self-aggrandizing, have a ball and prosper, and the righteous look forward to a program of being plagued and punished every morning.

We're the ones who struggle. If I had my way, I would even go on in this talk in this way, I would have been untruth to the circle of your children. I'm almost tempted to join them.

I mean, they're running away with the show. They've got all the marvels. They've got all the cards.

The world is running after their autograph. I'll get in this act also. Why not? If it was not for your children, the thing that keeps me is my obligation to your people.

Otherwise, I'd be tempted to be an actor and a performer also, and I'd make a better show of it than them. When I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task until I went into the sanctuary of God. Then I perceived the end.

Well, can I take the liberty again of suggesting that the sanctuary of God and the house of God and the Zion of God and the Tent of Shem are all one and the same thing? But it's a place, note this, that the psalmist has not yet come. Who of us have shared his vexation? Who of us are so aligned with his righteousness and so great a love for God and the jealousy for his name and honor that we have been stretched to breaking over evils much greater than what he knew in his generation and that are everywhere about us and are called Christian, called charismatic, called apostolic, called prophetic? Where's our vexation? Have we come to the righteousness and love and identification with God as this psalmist? And yet for all that, however he exceeds us in authentic spirituality, he had not yet entered the sanctuary of God. And it's only his vexation that brings him to it.

But we who are more ordered, poised, have a handle on things, are not in any sense anguished by the seeming contradictions about God in the church and in reality and in life, are never brought to that place. There's a place sense that this psalm indicates for which God waits, but it's not an easy or an accessible place or place of convenience. You have almost to be driven by your own vexation to seek for an answer that all your categories, however correct, will not give you.

Unless you see from that place, you'll not see. You'll misconstrue, you'll misunderstand, you'll be offended, you'll take offense at even the things of God. There's a true place of seeing that God waits to enter.

And wouldn't the ultimate irony be that there's no understanding of the Tent of Shem except in the Tent of Shem? It cannot be given to you from outside of it. You understand it at the point of entry, but the point of entry requires you're being provoked. It's something like baptism.

Maybe in earlier years I used to wait until a young convert would come to a certain comprehension and understanding of the value of baptism and then I would baptize him or her. But in the more recent years, instantly. Why? Because the very understanding of the knowledge and the significance and the mystery of baptism comes in the baptism itself.

The same thing with Jesus. Come unto me, he said to his kinsmen, because I am myself the key to the understanding of me. I am the interpretive key.

I am the hermeneutic of the faith in myself. Unless you come unto me and into me, you'll not understand it. You'll not understand it from outside the sanctuary.

I am the sanctuary. I am the Zion of God. I am the Tent of Shem.

Unless you come in, you cannot see nor understand who I myself am. I'm the key of my own interpretation and understanding. So you'll never get it from outside looking in.

You'll be vexed. Until I went into the sanctuary, then I perceived their end. Then he saw that though these guys are having a field day, getting away with murder, it's only a moment in time.

Their ultimate destiny in eternity is horrible beyond all description. God is just. God is righteous.

And this life is not the end all and be all. It's only a fragmentary initial episode in which the issues of eternity are being decided. But he had to see the end.

And the end of the thing is the truth of the thing. And it's only to be found in the sanctuary of God. It's not only I saw the end, the end of everything, the meaning of it, the thing that disturbs us and that we can't quite reconcile.

The understanding of that is to come in that place. Truly you set them in slippery places. You make them fall to ruin.

They are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terror. They are like a dream that when one awakes, on waking you despise the phantoms. Then he goes back to himself.

When my soul was embittered and I was pricked in my heart, I was stupid and ignorant. I was like a brute beast toward you. What a confession.

Now that I see their end, it's not only I'm repeating myself, their end that I'm seeing, I'm seeing all end. And in the light of the end, looking back upon myself, I realized I was as a beast toward you. I was so thick, so dull, so insensate, so incapable of understanding.

I was opposing you in seeming defense of your faith. I was stupid and ignorant. I was like a brute beast toward you.

And if we're like that toward him in our unseeing, what are we like toward others? Even others in the most holy faith. If we're capable of this kind of attitude toward the Lord in our best well-meaning intention of

what are we not capable? And what are we not performing? So I'm taking this very literally, that there's a place in God of ultimate seeing. We ought to stop our mouths and hold ourselves in reservation about any judgment, any temptation to quickly dismiss or conclude about something being from God or not, or any of the kinds of things that seem to be in seeming conflict with what we understand, even the understanding which is given of God.

There's always a dimension more. There's always a further understanding. There's always an ultimate light, but it's not to be found outside the sanctuary, but within.

So if this psalmist prophet himself had to be driven to that place, what shall we say for ourselves? This is the kind of dilemma to which Jews will be brought in the last days. Everything that attends the name of Jesus is anathema for them. They got a whole history of persecution in that name.

And yet it's the only name given whereby they may be saved. They've got to pass through something that completely configures and contradicts what they have been given to understand, which they are absolutely assured is correct. So correct they'll die in refusing it, but they have got to be brought to a place of such perplexity that they are forced through their own categories, which have been established and understood and confirmed and into a place of new seeing in the sanctuary of God.

And here they'll recognize that the name that they could hardly pronounce is the name of the Holy One of Israel himself, that what they had been taught to reject is the key to their own salvation. So this psalm is remarkable in what it represents. And the benefit that comes to the psalmist having entered that sanctuary, and once being spoiled by that light, shall you ever again see it the same? You go back again to where you were? Something has happened of a transcendent kind that leaves an indelible mark and an acquisition of a kind that changes everything.

It's an ultimate seeing, not only of the issue that vexed you, but all seeing thereafter. You're spoiled. You have seen now from the light of the sanctuary, and you'll never again yield to being merely correct.

You'll be suspicious of your own correctness as well you should, because there's a dimension beyond that which is God. And the last testing of our fidelity to him and our abandonment to him is our willingness to pass through the veil of our correctness and into the realm where he is, who alone is Lord. And we seem to contradict himself, testing us to see where our real devotion ultimately lies.

Does it lie in him or our convictions about him? Does it lie in him who is truth or the truth about the truth? See how subtle this is, and how close that a miss is as good as a mile. Israel missed it right at that point. In the very defense of what they thought right, they persecuted and killed the Lord of Glory, their own expected and awaited Messiah.

Don't think that we are not guilty of the same, and maybe we have to come full circle to perform the same in order to come to a place of brokenness and repentance by which we learn to distrust our own humanity and our own correctness and say the Lord is Lord. That's abandonment. Whatsoever he sayeth unto you, do it.

What? Fill stolen water jars with water? What's the sense of that? Whatsoever he sayeth, whithersoever he goeth. This ultimacy of abandonment and commitment is the thing for which the Lord waits, a virginal company. And the great irony, I'm repeating myself again and again, is the paradox that we're not kept from it because of our canality.

We're kept from it because of our spirituality. And so the man coming through this remarkable experience sees himself as he was, as a beast. You can't find language more graphic than that.

Of course, it's hyperbolic language. It's exaggerated. But in view of the way I now see and I now understand, looking back to what I was before that crisis, I was, I was as a dumb beast.

I thought that I knew, but I say now, I didn't know as I ought to know. It required a crisis that you have precipitated by allowing such seeming paradox and contradiction in life and in the world, or I would not have been brought by that vexation into the sanctuary of God. You allowed yourself to be dishonored.

You allowed yourself to be mocked by these guys whose eyes are swollen with fat and having a field day in their complete disregard of you. You were willing that your reputation should suffer enormously, that by it and only by it, I would be brought to such a place of seeming contradiction and vexation that even my mind and my sanity were at stake. You allowed yourself to be defamed and need to be stretched almost to the place of ultimate breaking, almost to the temptation to forsake the faith and become like them in order that I should come into this place.

Is that place that important? Yes. It is the ultimate place. And few there be of us that are in it.

Few there be of us that even believe that it awaits us. Few of us that desire it and few of us who really have so great a love and jealousy that we are vexed by the seeming contradictions to be brought to that place. And once you come, all seeing is affected, even the way in which you view yourself.

Nevertheless, in verse 23, I am continually with you and I'm with you in a new way. You hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel.

There's almost like a sense of limpness like this man has been so broken at the foundations of his own conceit and his own religious rectitude that now he's like a child having to be led by the hand. I'll no longer presume to come in and bring correction and I'm going to show you that I'm led by the hand. I dare not open my mouth.

Even when I mean well, I bring injury. But unless we are this to Israel, how shall they see their Messiah and their God? So long as we're a hotshot, strident, rival, competitive, clear, we've got the message, we have the truth, we continue to alienate them. They need to see a limp people, broken, looking to the Lord, having the correct view about yourself and my enjoyment of being correct.

That is earthly even when it's spiritual. Who has been searched out by God to that depth where they are willing to forsake even the enjoyment of being correct about God and have no nothing in the earth that I desire other than you. Not the doctrines about you, the truth about you, you yourself and yourself as is now being revealed that I had never seen how far you will go.

That you will allow yourself to be defamed and your name demeaned and dishonored and your psalmist to be stretched to breaking to the point of insanity because of the light of the sanctuary and what alone is to be found there. It makes me to understand you in a way that I've never understood you before and to appreciate you in a way that I've never appreciated you before and love you in a way that I have never loved you before. It took this crisis and that you are willing to allow me to be stretched to the breaking of it shows me how great your love is toward me or else I would have died as a dumb beast.

I would have gone on into eternity applauding myself and congratulating myself for being the great defender of your faith only to find out in the day of eternity that I was a dumb beast, that my very rightness was the very thing that threatened and intimidated your lordship. I thank you that you love me so much that you allowed me to be vexed to breaking while I yet had breath. That has got to affect the way in which I see you, appreciate you, and love you.

My flesh and my heart may fail but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Indeed those who are far away from you will perish. You put an end to those who have forced you but as for me it is good to be near God.

Where is that place? In the tent. It's the tent of Shem. Not a Jewish tent.

It's Shem's tent. It's the God of Shem whose tent that is. It's good to be near you and in that place I'm spoiled.

I've seen something from that place that is not available from any other and it has affected all my seeing. I no longer will trust my own perception or analysis or critique. I'll always hold myself in reserve knowing there's an ultimate place of seeing where you are for there we see as you see and in no other place.

And when we see as you see, the thing that offended us and that we were so alert to defend against, we find out in the great irony was yourself and you calling us to a deeper place and we resisted it in your name. So great is the want of that seeing which is an ultimate seeing and to be found in one place only and there we're called to dwell. To dwell in the tent of Shem while we're yet in the earth.

I have made the Lord God my refuge and here's the punchline to tell of all your works. Now I can represent you. Now I can speak of you.

Now I can proclaim the things that I myself did not before understand and proclaim them in the light of this seeing. Of course the commentator here has remarkable observations that deserve our review and our enjoyment that this incalculably difficult question, this thing that vexed the psalmist, that raised bodily suffering to the point of intolerability. How far will God go? You guys think you've seen something? You call this dissension? You call this a shaking? You call this tension and the difficulty? Kid stuff.

This is kid stuff against the kinds of things that we are likely to experience increasingly as we come into the last days. My definition of a saint is one who can bear the tensions of the faith. These are only preliminary vibrations.

These are not tensions of the kind that bring us to the point of intolerability where our very sanity is at risk. In this affliction, the sufferer took refuge with Yahweh. He came to the place of proximity to God, the sanctuary.

We have trivialized and cheapened God to think that that sanctuary, that tent is a place that we can enter at will as if we're on a tourist visa out of curiosity. We'll lift the flap and peek in. Nothing doing.

Holy, holy, holy. It's the Zion of God. It's Shem's tent.

There's a light in there of an uncommon kind. It's not for the curious. It's not for the transient.

It's for those who enter in order to dwell, recognizing that dwelling there alone is the place of safety. That is rectitude, and anything outside of that place is less. Here is the end.

Not the end of the wicked, yes also, but the end of all things. We must see in view of the end. We must have an eschatological comprehension of things to which things are tending, not because we have it nailed down as doctrine, but because we have apprehended and been apprehended by the God who is both the beginning and the end, and will give us glimpse of it and the glory of it in that one place alone where that light is to be seen.

Otherwise, we're merely doctrinal. We're merely correct. We have an understanding that we can take off, but it's not enough.

To follow the Lamb whithersoever. It's the end that enables us to be sustained now. A real glimpsing of the end beyond the issue of doctrine.

I don't want to demean doctrine. Doctrine is truth, but there's something to which doctrine points is he who is the truth. The reality, the ineffable, unspeakable, and ultimate reality of God himself.

God forbid that we fall short of that glory and of that reality and that truth because we are satisfied with the truths about the truth, the truths about the end times. Is there anything more brittle and doctrinaire than some hotshot who's equipped with a knowledge of the last days and condemns the church as Babylon and celebrates an elite sonship and all the kinds of things. These are the evils that issue from merely being correct in our brain box that have not really seen because we have not really entered.

And that entering, as I'm saying, is so dear to God. He'll not think it too extravagant to bring us to the place of suffering of an intolerable kind before we experience the joy of the light of God in true seeing. Don't fall short of the glory.

This is the fellowship of his suffering. The quest for truth is a suffering. Those who have to proclaim it who themselves don't have a full comprehension and yet cannot withhold.

And those who have to live with the guy and respond and bear up what seems to them points of remarkable collision and threatening heresy. Hey, bend Israel is a suffering before it's a glory. We have never had access to anything out of that which is shallow.

Everything that we have received has come out of a suffering, out of a collision of having to be opposed and be opposing. And because we can still hold together in that framework of tension, ultimately, the Lord will bring us to the true scene, but it's a suffering for him who proclaims. It's a suffering for them who have to bear him.

That's the church. So the end, the prophet, the psalmist is able to proclaim and tell of all your works, nothing withheld because now he has glimpsed the totality and the utterance of God and the end of all things. I can proclaim them in that light.

Scaling through the experience of suffering, and as asserted, he writes for all of life and therefore for all future generations. The great danger to the psalmist, the thing that vexed him almost to insanity was the fear of the loss of the knowledge of God as God. The thing that brought him to the brink of disaster was that God himself was being contradicted in his own understanding.

We can bear anything else. And that's why the Holocaust book is so remarkable a thing, because it raises questions about God. Why is a book called the Holocaust, where was God? Because no one has raised the question as if there was not a God around to see, to know, to observe, or he was asleep that day, or

he was indifferent to the plight of his own people.

How can that be God? That is so uncaring and watching his own people, even in their apostasy, being systematically annihilated by the millions, including 1,500,000 children and infants thrown up and speared on bayonets or shot in the air or thrown into flaming tanks of gasoline. A God who cannot see that and have no compassion for that is ipso facto not God. Okay, so he saw it.

Well, then he was too powerless to do anything. What? The creator of the heavens and earth, by his word, was incapable of affecting and altering that terror and that devastation? Well, he's no longer God if he has not that power. Well, then how do we reconcile this? We're afraid to ask the question.

We're afraid to look into that burning bush, for we know that once we turn aside to try and look into the fire that continues to burn and is not consumed, we'll not be able to turn back again to our neat and convenient categories. God is this, God is that, he's kind, he's loving, he's never, never, never, never. That reinforces our comfort zone and has him nicely boxed in and packaged in keeping with our bourgeois middle-class lifestyle.

But to see God in the burning bush, the place of judgment, and begin to turn to consider that is to open a view of God to which you'll never be able to turn back again. You're ruined with a new kind of seeing that touches not only the issue of the Holocaust but all issues. Who's willing for that? The thing that we covet most and we need most in our own personal insecurity is a clear understanding about God from the framework of the scripture and his doctrines and lines up with what we understand and believe and are able to serve good.

It's good, but it's not good enough. And unless we're willing to abandon that good in order to come to a greater apprehension of that which we're forfeiting, we will not follow the land with us. There'll come a moment, maybe the moment is coming now, where you'll opt out.

Something like Moses coming into the cloud for six days before on the seventh day, the Lord called him to himself. The stark terror of that glory, that burning glory on Mount Sinai, that people shuddered and trembled, even viewing it as a distance. Here's the man of God going into the midst of that fire, waiting for six days in the smoke.

Six is the number of men and what happened in that smoke only God knows. The prince of Egypt and the Levitical son of God, who is to be the apostolic deliverer of Israel, with all of his knowledge, all of his categories, everything obtained in wilderness, dwelling, and all of the things that were constituent in the formation of his life, dissolved in that smoke. When he was called on the seventh day, which is the number of perfection and completion, there was nothing left of Moses in his understanding, in his correctness, in his doctrines about God.

Something more had to be imparted from God himself in his presence. What was at Sinai was that tent, that Zion, that dwelling, that union, and that the man could come down from the not just with tablets, but the knowledge of the God who gave the tablets, or else we are legalistic even in our correctness. Something had to be communicated to Israel beyond legality, beyond the requirement of the law, but the nature of the lawgiver himself, which few of us know, or we would be speaking about the law differently.

The way we speak of it, as if it represents a mean and cheap legalism that is God denying and life denying, is the indication we've never been up to that mountain. There's a place of union, whether you call

it the sanctuary, Zion, the dwelling, the tent, you can't bow to enter, you can't come into that and bring your categories with you. Someone said, isn't it obvious? You can't bow to enter the tent of Hashem and bring your knapsack.

You've got to shock off, not vile things, good things, because the good is ever and always the enemy of the perfect. Have we a confidence in God that if we can have the courage to lay aside what has constituted our spiritual security and understanding, that he'll give us on that seventh day a measure of the knowledge of him that is beyond speaking and its pricelessness, that we can communicate not only the essence of his law, but the essence of the law given? And that's what an apostle is. He doesn't just bring correct doctrines.

He brings the sense of God as God himself is. And that's to be found in one place only, the sanctuary, and our own correctness keeps us from anything. So poor man had to come to the brink of insanity to finally come into that place.

The turning point is reached, this German theologian writes, in the sanctuary of God, the place of the nearness of God. God's sacred mysteries are in the area of the sanctuary. Into them the psalmist has finally entered in order to receive an explanation in the abode of God's own presence.

The final event that explains everything because it sees the end of the things that were previously veiled in the light of the reality of God, something ultimate, something final in the most profound sense of the word is revealed. A truth that breaks through all disguises and seeming contradictions of life and history comes in this revelation. The seeming contradictions, the seeming things that offend and make us to recoil and draw back are seen in a new light, in the light of that sanctuary.

It's the place of ultimate revelation. Now the knowledge which the sufferer has gained is full of assurance no matter how they had previously appeared. Before the brightness of God's reality, the assured life conditions of the evil enjoying the wicked, enjoying prosperity, suddenly disappear for the psalmist has received a revelation of God's final dispositions and has seen that it's already accomplished.

He doesn't have to wait for that to be experienced. If he sees it in God, it's as good as performed and therefore he's relieved. He can come back again into the world, still see the apparent contradictions but abide them.

He has glimpsed the end and the ultimate thing in that revelation. What in this world can no longer be demonstrated empirically is cleared up prophetically. Mamma mia, what a statement.

What could not be seen in the world empirically could not be understood as knowledge and demonstrated and proved because God will never give the revelation there is seen in the sanctuary prophetically. And I don't think that that's an accidental word. That's the very genius of what prophetic is, is the communication, the seeing of ultimate things that have not yet been made visible or tested or proved empirically in the world of religion.

That cannot prove it. And yet I run it apart and there's a place for those proofs. There's a place for the testing of the faith.

There's a place for the testing even of the prophet as came up last night. But also at the same time the recognition, ultimate revelation abides in that place. I wrote at the bottom of the page, the irony is that the question of whether the subject of the tent of Shem is of God is to be answered and found only within the

tent itself.

Isn't that remarkable? We'll never prove it. We'll never nail it down doctrinally. It's an apparition.

It's an intuition. It's a sense, a prophetic sense that perhaps was given in that very place, but you'll only have it confirmed and revealed in that place, never empirically in the religious world. That requires a certain relationship with the bearer of that kind of vision.

And what we have understood that God has given to the church, apostles, prophets, this is much more than a technical acknowledgement of these categories and titles. It's the receiving of the strange and offensive thing that the prophetic man is and his seeing that our own calling puts us in tension with. We're not all prophets.

We have to be what we are in the calling of God. But ironically, it's that very calling that disqualifies us from understanding and seeing what he has. And maybe the church will not be the church and move Israel to jealousy and fulfill this remarkable mandate until somehow there's the deepest reconciliation of these apparent contradictions and tensions.

Maybe we need to see all of these callings in the tent and not to hold them as technical nomenclature that God gave to the church. They're seeing and seeing there's knowing and knowing not only God, but even the categories of God. And maybe that's the difference between a true and false apostle and prophet.

One has it as nomenclature and technical vocabulary, which is correct. And the other has it as the revelation that comes from the place itself. Come unto me, Jesus said, and provided his own generation with the key to the interpretation of himself.

Unless you come unto me, you cannot see. You can argue through the scriptures and how can anyone come out of Nazareth? Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? The son of Joseph, you'll be defied in every category unless you come unto me. Come in because I myself am the interpretive key of myself.

So long as you walk in and want to cleave to your correctness, you'll miss me. And the same issue that was Israel's undoing is a prospect for ourselves. We've come full circle.

In the sanctuary, in the place of the presence of God, the psalmist becomes aware of an unchangeable fact. I belong to you. You have taken hold of my right hand.

Yahweh has drawn near to him who considers himself lost and forsaken. He has let him recognize the certainty of belonging to God and the saving way of clutching him just before he was about threatened to slip away even from his own sanity. How far will we go and how far will we allow ourselves to go to obtain a reality and the knowledge of God beyond our categories? How far will we allow ourselves to come close to slipping away, which is a threat? But the church is slipping away at the seeming prospect of heresy.

How far will we allow God to draw us out into a place where the ultimate revelation of himself and his truth waits? If we cling to our correctness and to the security of it, we'll always fall short of that place. And so the Psalm 73 is historical. It's not hypothetical.

It's a narrative. It's a statement of the experience of a man, but it's a declaration of God for all generations and for ourselves, especially the last generation. This is the very crisis through which all that is Israel must necessarily pass with the Jesus that confounds all their Jewish categories and their bitterly negative

history.

It will be the same trial for their souls, the very key to their fulfillment. That is that Israel itself has to pass through this veil. Everything is calculated against it.

All their categories are correct. Their history of persecution by so-called Christians confirms that this is error of the most malicious kind, that this presumer was was a deceiver. Remember what they said? Guard that tomb for this deceiver said that on the third day he will rise again.

That's how they saw him. And that's how they continue to see him and will remain seeing him unless they are brought by a vexation of such a kind that cannot be reconciled with their categories and with their history, a breakthrough into an existential dimension of the appropriation of the truth, which will require remarkable suffering. Israel's suffering is for this revelation.

It will not come in any other way. They're not going to be persuaded by step one, step two, step three, four spiritual laws or five spiritual laws. They're going to have to come to an ultimate vexation of soul, so ultimate that it seems to contradict what they know about God, that God would never do this.

God would never say that. God would never come in the form of flesh. God would never be an infant.

God would never be crucified between criminals in a dung heap outside of the holy city. God would never offend against the Sabbath. He would never allow his disciples to eat.

He would never take bread from the holy table. He would never, he would never, he would never. Our categories say they're impeccable and our rabbis have confirmed them and our experience for the centuries.

But now we're brought in the last days into such a contradiction, such vexation. What do we do with these Christians and their willingness to die for us and even by us and the kind of love that they're demonstrating and they speak of it as coming from our God. They're forced to an ultimate contradiction that will only break through in near insanity into the sanctuary of God and they will see.

But we have to proceed them in that seeing or we ourselves will not produce the crisis for them by which they will see. If we are only correct, we don't present to them a crisis. But having come from the sanctuary of God and from the dwelling of God and in union with God, the way that we will deport ourselves and express ourselves contradicts all the categories.

Maybe this is what the New York thing represents, a first step, a first fruit in following the lamb with us forever. The very willingness to come, to write a letter, to appear is already something that they have to break their heads to consider. It's outside their categories and that's where God is, where he is ultimately is, where he is profoundly is, is outside our categories.

Not that our categories are wrong, but they're insufficient. So also are theirs. It's a suffering to go from the one to the other, but the sufferer goes on to meet his glorious destiny, ours and theirs.

The fulfillment that awaits this seeing, that revelatory thing that is to be found in the sanctuary of God, the light of his appearance in glory, a miracle without equal that changes all visible conditions of life. For the psalmist, the new ultimate dispensation of God is disclosed. A union with Jehovah is awaited, which even physical death cannot set aside or even interrupt.

Clearly, the psalm wants to emphasize that life cannot be judged by the appearance of the moment. Praise God for that. We have to look to the end.

What we call reality stands in need of a new final review. If the church is anything, you dear saints, it is the statement of ultimate reality for the want of which the world is dying. It will not be saved by correct categories, but by the communication of a reality that lies too deep for words from which our categories have kept us.

Reality. Reality is sanity and the paradox is that the man is drawn to a near insanity in order to find it. Do we love God enough for that? Are we willing to suffer that kind of anguish of soul where it seems like our very faith is at threat and at risk, is scandalously close to being violated or dismissed or made heretical? Are we willing to be stretched to the ultimate place of breaking in a deepest kind of anguish that exceeds mere physical suffering because it's a moral anguish in the prospect that God may not be God as we know him, understand him and desire him to be.

That there's a knowledge of him beyond our knowledge. I'm not, you thought I was one like yourself. He's the other.

There's an otherness about God and that otherness is reality and it's that for that want of that reality that the world cannot define, that is its salvation. But who can communicate it? But those who have been brought to that place by their willingness to bear these remarkable tensions. We have to look at the end.

The end is the future. The revealing of the emergence of God's final activity. Jehovah's Yahweh's final intervention and operation.

The futility, the seeming collapse of faith is replaced by the fullness of communion with God, which breaks up every final trace of wilderness. I would go further and would say that that communion with God breaks up every final trace, not only wilderness, not only carnality, but also of nationality, also of ethnic distinction and gentilic pride. It breaks up every last indefinable thing that we could never have identified if we stood in our heads and yet the elements of it are with us and will only be met in that ultimate and final place.

There alone is it broken up. There alone is it dispelled. Even when those people came forward in Canada to the invitation to bow and enter the tent of Shem, I found myself praying over them that something would be removed from them in that breaking because you can't take your baggage in.

It would have to be left outside. Its use in the future is up to the God whom you'll meet now in new union and even the baggage that constitutes a sentimental affection for Israel, which impedes and stands in the way of the authentic love of God for Israel. For a sentiment will go up like a puff when Israel will increasingly disappoint us as she is daily now doing and disappoint herself.

Many will fall away from their shallow Christian Zionist identification. And Paul speaks of the great falling away of the last days, of which I believe a disappointment in Israel and a disappointment in God, both born out of shallow knowledge, both of God and of the purposes of God for Israel will account for a great apostasy. Unless we're willing to forfeit that shallower thing which we enjoy possessing and keeping and continuing in, we cannot receive the authentic that issues out of the communion with Shem himself in his tent.

And I prayed, Lord, take out and divest those counterfeit things which we clutch and so enjoy, planting trees and going to Feast of Tabernacles outings and giggling and titillating and pinching the cheeks of

Jews. Our Gentile souls love it, but there's something much deeper that needs to be imparted or we'll never be able to bear with them when they come to us in their flight and in their desperate exile, broken and shattered and stinking and in their rags and unkind and mean-spirited and full of filthy epithets against us and against the faith. How shall we bear them? Except by the invincible and unconditional love of God that knows no conditions.

Sentiment will never stand. You lose something when you bow to enter, but you gain something and you gain something of such a kind that will be salvational for them in the last days and all the world. And it's only to be obtained then, I believe, and so does this commentator.

It's a miracle without equal that changes all the conditions of life. What we call reality stands in the need of a new final review. We have to look at the end, which is the future of God.

Here the final truth of God that overturns everything is revealed to the psalmist who has entered. Everything that was made that had been relative is now replaced by the fullness of communion with God. Nothing on earth stands in the way.

Here the final truth of God that overturns everything is revealed to him. He's intimately joined to God and looks forward to the removal to glory. The end has been glimpsed, which produces a turn and a change of the aspects of reality itself.

Beholding the end conditions the way in which the present is seen and the past is understood. They're indivisible, but the end was not available to the psalmist until he entered the sanctuary of God. It may have been available to him as categories, as correct doctrine, but it was not available to him as revelation.

Not only the revelation of the end, but of the God of the end. Once you see that and see him, it affects the present, past, the future. It's the reality.

It's ultimate reality. It produces a change of the aspects of reality which will be effective for Israel when they come into the deeps of their despair. We'll be able to communicate something to them that can only have been seen from that place.

Someone had asked, Art, what makes this expulsion different from previous expulsions of God's dealings with Israel as judgment? What's to say that even when they return as the redeemed of the Lord, they'll not again be cast out? When will they learn the lesson of expulsion? When it shall be told them, when it shall be prophetically explained to them with a view and a light that the church has never been able to communicate to the Jew. It's not only that they're going to receive in the wilderness physical sustenance, but explanation of a prophetic kind that makes all of their suffering and exile worthwhile. It must come to us first before we can communicate to them what ultimate reality is and how far God will go for the people Israel to be that blessing to the nations of the earth, that it was not extravagant to uproot them, put them in collision with all of their trusted categories and bring them to a place of such utter desperation that when we speak the word of life to them, they understand and return as the redeemed of the Lord to Zion with everlasting joy upon their heads.

They are brought into a completely different realm of life beyond this one. Death was no barrier to God's power because the psalmist says, I will ever be with you. He has seen the eternity of God, which is the greatest security.

And therefore we can bear anything seeing that. It's the insecurity of fear that the loss of our trusted categories will bring us to a collapse. But seeing the end and the eternity of God, you come back into this life with a remarkable framework of the deepest kind of security that can bear anything.

It's a completely different realm of life beyond this one. So the church of the new covenant reads and understands this psalm in view of the fact that Jesus Christ is the place, the Zion of God and the sanctuary of God and the temple of God and the 10th of Shem are all the one, the Lord himself is that place, the place of God's presence in whom the reality of divine grace and divine judgment is obtained and made known. He himself is the turn.

He himself is the final one, the ultimate one whom all opinions of faith and life one and obtained in the world are overturned. In him, the Christian experiences the miracle of communion with God, which overcomes all affliction, even death. So what is the last day's peril? The risk of standing for God in such a way as to oppose as to by the good to oppose the perfect of the defending of what is given against that which is being given and so cherishing the wave that has come so as to be threatened by the wave that is coming of opposing the future and the now present truth by the past truth.

These are the perils of our generation and of this moment that God is acting out with us. The danger of limiting the Holy One of Israel by defending him. If that's not paradox, I don't know what is.

It was Israel's great sin and it was done out of the best and well-meaning intentions of correct categories. So Lord, save us from the defenders of the faith, but save us also from the heretical innovators of the faith. It's a double danger.

I'm mindful of that. What keeps me from being a heretical innovator and just coining something out of my own mind? What does God say about the false prophets? I never sent them. The vision that they have at the dream of out of which they speak was their own.

I never gave it and I never sent them. What's my safety is that I'm sent and I'm sent out of a sending body and that I'm in a relationship, not just an occasional frequent, but a continual basis that sees to the integrity and the truth of the life, knowing that a true prophet can become false and can move from the revelation of things that are given to things that he coins out of his own imagining or that become dear to him as the doctrines become dear to those who hold them. We are in the faith is dangerous.

It's charged with landmines. It's full of paradox, but it's our calling. But this, the church as the church is our safety.

And I'm so blessed in my soul to hear from different ones who have observed our tension and our conflict in these days that they say, but we see that you love one another. Oh, do you see that? I wasn't aware of it myself. Do you see that? Is it that visible? Well, praise God for it.

It's our saving grace that we can hold steady. We've not been this way here too far. And every element in this charge situation is given by God.

I'm acting out of the calling that I'm given, but they are acting out of the calling they are given. And out of the givenness of God comes the contradiction and the tension, but out of it also will come an ultimate resolution that will transcend all of our callings and bring us into that precious and ultimate place by which we shall follow lamb with us. So ever he goeth and not once spoke by anything that is uncertain, unfamiliar, or seems at the moment to be in contradiction with what we know of God.

We will know the lamb. We will know his voice and he will lead us into green pastures and we'll lie down by still waters. So the firstfruits company, the distinctive of it is to follow the lamb with us forever.

And so the issue before us now is not so much the Tent of Shem, but what its consideration is revealing of our secret heart. I'll tell you how far I think God would go. Maybe I'm all wet on the Tent of Shem.

Maybe the Lord has allowed me to play with something fanciful that I particularly enjoy. Not so much because it's necessarily true, but because it is calculated to produce a necessary conflict and tension. For had we not had that conflict and not had that tension, we would not have been brought into the place of the sanctuary.

In order to see, we would have been vexed unbearably and even to the point of the dissolution of the faith and of the community. How far will God go to bring us to a place of transcendence and majesty of the glory of what the church is? Are we going to come to that in some cheap and costless way or will it be through a suffering? So I'm not even making a case that the Tent of Shem is the truth of God. Let's leave that aside.

Whether it's the Tent of Shem or some other thing, Psalm 53, or that you've eaten my people as bread, not being my people Israel, but my people the Palestinian, I'll leave to the realm of speculation. Whether it's this or that, this much I will say, God will not leave us without issues. He'll not leave us without tensions of a very real kind that are produced not out of our carnality or our humanity, but out of our very calling.

We have each to act out of the genuine distinction of that to which we are called. And in acting out of that, the conflict is produced that compels us to a place that we would not have desired, seen, or obtained before. And all Israel will be the beneficiary.

So I hope there's no one saying, well, what do you expect God to say? He's got to justify and defend himself. I'm willing to allow that might be true. I'm not conscious of it, but that doesn't mean that it's not a possibility.

It might be the truth. And part of the suffering is to bear that prospect, not only of the indictment that is false, but the indictment that might be true. Churches are suffering saints and we embrace it as privilege because all Israel waits in the back for a people who can explain to it, its own predicament.

And in fact, what we are in God will produce their predicament. It will vex them unbearably. They have us all categorized.

Churches, right-wing fundamentalists, they want to convert us. They only want to see Israel to succeed because they believe that in Israel's success, the Lord will come. We are only an expedient element in their doctrinal theology that their Jesus might come.

They have no interest in us for our own sake. What are they going to do with us? What are they going to do with the more virginal people who follow the lamb, whether so ever, and who display and exhibit his nature, character, and light? It'll force them into a new perplexity of an anguish because they want so easily to be able to dismiss us, but they'll not be able to spit it out. They'll kick against the bricks as Saul did with Stephen until finally the Lord in his own appearing will bring them through to their own apostolate.

But we must be that factor. We've got to see the heavens opened. We've got to see from within the sanctuary of God.

And so pray and thank the Lord for the crisis that he has given us in his own wisdom, not so much of whether it's true or not, but how it compels us to break loose and to abandon the things that keep us from the ultimate place of God, both as prophets, apostles, teachers, or whatever our calling. Got the picture? Well, there's more to be gleaned from this, but it's enough for today to chew on and to thank the Lord for. The test of Abraham is the final test that shattered all of his categories about God.

It seems so much to be an echo of the pagan practice of the immolation of their own children, which take that only son whom thou lovest and make of him a sacrifice in the month that I will show you. He had every reason to ignore that requirement and believe that it came from the evil one. But he rose up early in the morning and sat on his ass, cut his wood, took his son, and went.

The ultimate test of an Abrahamic people is to follow the Lord with his every even when he seems to contradict himself. What do we read in Proverbs? Don't answer a fool according to his own foolishness, unless you become engaged by him. The next verse says, answer a fool according to his foolishness that he might be saved out of the same.

God says the one says the other. What do we read in Amos chapter nine? The eyes of the Lord are upon the sinful kingdom. I will destroy it from the face of the earth, except I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob says the Lord.

I will destroy all except I will not utterly destroy it. Come on Lord, get with it, put up or shut up. Be clear, like us.

God is God. The Lord is the Lord. Precious God on high, expand our hearts Lord.

Forgive us if we have put you in a box and we have limited the Holy One of Israel in our correct understanding about you. My God, you're not to be confined even by that understanding. You're expansive.

There's no limit to the Holy One of Israel and yet your truths, my God, are enviable, sacred and holy. What are we to do with that kind of attention? Help us with a grace Lord in the very thing through which we're passing and we bless you. We bless you Lord.

Privilege, I don't know of any church or any people who have been exposed and summoned to crisis of this kind, but ourselves here in these days and we thank you for it Lord. And to whom much is given, much is required. We thank you Lord.

Oh, precious God, what privilege. We wouldn't want you to take anything back. It was worth all the suffering, the misunderstanding, the confusion, the dirty looks, the apprehension, all of those kinds of things.

More painful when they come not from strangers but those with whom you're daily and intimately joined. How can you blame them? They're standing a safeguard. And so my God, we bless you.

Thank you Lord. Breathe whatever was spoken this morning that is out of your heart and appointed for our understanding. God forbid so much as a syllable shall fall to the ground.

Wherever we are wanting, wherever we have limited you, we ask your forgiveness. Myself and all this people, Lord, bring us into that dimension, my God, for which is that virginal bridal company that has no

category, no conviction, however dear that will in any way impede or limit yourself. We will follow you wither so ever, as Abraham did because we know the voice of our shepherd.

And we thank you, my God. You're good altogether and precious.

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