

Dvd 38 the Last Interview

by Art Katz

Art Katz emphasizes the critical importance of words, community, and eschatology in the life of the Church to reflect God's glory and purpose.

Duration: 50:27

Scripture: Acts 1:6

Topics: "Kingdom Of God", "Eschatology"

Description

This sermon delves into the importance of understanding and embodying the concept of the kingdom of God, emphasizing the need for a deep reverence for God's Word and a prophetic consciousness within the Church. It discusses the significance of martyrdom as a demonstration of ultimate submission to God's lordship and the anticipation of the kingdom's establishment. The message calls for a profound shift in perspective towards Israel and the eschatological urgency that should define the Church's existence.

Transcript

Open the heavens, precious God, and come down. What have you to say to the church, Lord, for which you have fitted this vessel to express and my brother to ask? We ask that, Lord, your divine, absolute lordship over this time and such an appropriate anointing, my God, that what is recorded will go far and wide and deep, right into the inmost being, Lord, of your church and perform there its needful work. So bless us together, Lord, of all the things that could be said, of all the questions that could be raised, of all the responses that could be given, edit, shape, form, bring forth what is upon your own great heart, for that alone is perfect.

Thank you, my God, for this privileged time and that you can express these things to the mere, if not pitiful, clay vessels that we are. We give you the praise, the glory, and the honor for the privilege which is ours to be so employed. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. I'd like to, if possible, start off, perhaps you could share some things about the issue of words themselves, as we've heard you often say that you're more jealous for the word apostolic than you are for any other word. And just to consider maybe the cheapness or just the nature that's so common in the Western Church, and in particular with words, and how we're inundated and congested with so much talk, and yet we lack so often that sobriety and that sense that's necessary for the Church.

Well, the fact that the Lord is called the Word, God is the Word, and when we see him upon that apocalyptic horse, the title that is inscribed upon him is the Word, ought to give us every reason to revere words. And if the Church will not revere them, how shall we expect that in the world? So today I made an unconscious statement, but it wasn't premeditated in the morning service when I introduced my books. I described America as an increasingly non-literate nation, that is a flight away from the Word and toward images.

And I'm not a moviegoer, but the little glimpse that I have on rare occasion is to see that even movies have changed in their character. In the old days, there was a plot, there were characters, there was an unfolding that required your attention throughout an entire film, and that engaged you. Now there are little episodic 15-second, one-minute, two-minute shots, and then it moves to some other image.

So I'm concerned, because words are content, content is meaning, and if we lose that value, we lose much. So I think that the Church is reflecting the American temper. My own children, my own son, my youngest son, I think the only book he ever read was Tarzan of the Apes, or he'll read manuals in his field of computers, but he'll not read literature, he's not read anything that I've written, so I'm concerned for that.

We need to be guardians of the Word, not just biblical words, but especially, but words per se, meaning per se, for what is life if we've lost that? So one of the great distinctions that we bear being made in God's image is the ability to speak, to converse, to convey meaning through words. Think of the animals that are beneath man's level, that can only squeal, squeak, grunt, I mean, precious that they make some sound, but we can articulate, we can form thought, we can express concepts, and by that, even come to an approach to God himself, who gives us the Word, and then the most marvelous thing, that he'll even speak it out of our mouths. So I often call the Church to its prophetic function, to be jealous over words, and not to engage itself in cheap talk, or small talk, as the saying goes, or babble.

Isn't it interesting that Babylon has as its root, babble, just a profusion of meaninglessness that occupies time and space and says nothing. So a word should be few, but weighty, and that requires itself a certain disposition of spirit, because we revere meaning, and because every word that can be spoken has a redemptive prospect. So even on this trip, I'm going to be seeing a brother in Pennsylvania, a bus driver, takes tour buses to New York City, I sat with him for 10 or 15 minutes in his bus in the west side of Manhattan, and in those few minutes, I can't recall what was said, or what I said.

The man has not been able to say enough about that since, what it did for him, what it released for him. So may we cherish words, and look for those that are inspired from God, and to be able to give our mouth to it. And one last thought, that may be a benefit, don't engage a speaker before he has to speak, taking him from the airport to the place of speaking, and having to dissipate his oral energy away.

So when he speaks, then he is, something has gone out. So we need to revere the bearers of the word, and not distract them, and let them contain their thoughts, and that the word will have a full unction, because it has not been dissipated away in some lesser form. How would you connect that with the modern usage of those terms, apostle, prophet, the way that it, in the common charismatic magazine that you open, you can see a whole slew of men who have been titled, given these titles, and in comparison with the early church, and the meekness, and the quality, and the depth that we see in the scriptures, how would you, as far as the words are concerned, how would you go about, and I don't want to just speak systematically or programmatically, but how does one go about developing and cultivating that jealousy for words? I know that you've been 35, 40 years in that development, but you're speaking now to one who's

24 years old, and we're wanting to come into that kind of quality, that depth of maturity and so forth.

Of course, the two key words that you've mentioned, apostolic and prophetic, they're so all-inclusive, they are the very heart of the glory of God, and you're not going to find them, or any of the great words of the faith, by going to a dictionary. I mean, you'll find it, but that kind of definition is not adequate. These are words that need to be intuited, these are words that need to be appropriated.

What's the word? We need to be found by them, we need to take them into our spirit, we need to nurture those meanings. So I have often said to these who purport to be apostles and use such precious words lightly, keep your cotton-picking hands off, play some other game, but don't touch these words, lest they lose their credence, their credibility, their cogency, for if we lose those words, we lose everything. But unfortunately, they're not hearkening, and they're going about freely using those words and making them a commonplace, rather than revering them.

So we can only pine at such misuse, and be all the more jealous to God them, and be careful ourselves of how we understand them and express them. Would you say that one of the main reasons that movements like that can take place and carry themselves on is because they've taken place outside of community, outside of, it's been more of an institution? I heard you say once that you said to a leader in the modern prophetic movement, or at least you were speaking of him, that when you get to a place, brother, where if someone disagrees with you, you can fire them, then you're on the wrong grounds. You're on the grounds that lead to falsehood.

I think what I said, and this is presently one of the rising, or having risen, young now of international stature, who resented my own critical comments about his ministry, that if you come to a place where you cannot receive well-intended critical statements because you have too much investment to protect and divest yourself of that too much, especially being young, you should not allow yourself to come to a place where you have such a proprietary, vested interest to protect that you can no longer receive critical adjustment. So yes, I remember that episode well. And of course, such men are attended by staff whose salaries are paid, so they're not likely to receive from them the things that they need to hear.

Well, who will bite the hand that feeds it? So they need all the more to be open to what will come to them from outside their own establishment. But if they are defensive there, what correction is possible? So I appreciate that a visitor who came to our community years ago said, if I did not know who the elders were, who are the men in responsibility, I would be hard-pressed to identify them. All the more because we did not have labels, and that when we're not exercising the authority appropriate to our call or office, we're brothers with brothers.

That I think is the moment of context that God intends for a church that will be sane and realistic. That's so significant. I think that there's a great conversion that needs to take place in the Western world that we're presently finding ourselves in the midst of, even in our fellowship.

Basically, we can say that the things that came out of that book, of course, the scriptural realities, it's not some new revelation, it's just something that's coming out of the wellspring of God's wisdom that lines up with the scriptures. But ourselves, we've been under a reformation of sorts. We've been considering a lot lately the Anabaptists and the things that took place in those movements, and not in some kind of a superior way or some kind of an attitude that, oh, everyone else in a different avenue of church is missing it, but just jealous for God's glory and for him to be honored in the church and to know what it is to be the body, that mystery that just, as you said, can't be found in a dictionary, but needs to be expressed

somehow organically by the church.

And so I want, if possible, if you could articulate some things on your heart to the viewers who have no idea what we're talking about. Community. What do you mean, community? You know, you mean my neighborhood? Or what do you mean? What would you articulate to them as far as the thing that God is jealous for in the church along those lines? Well, I would say reality, authenticity, which is a synonym for the word apostolic, because if we are not that, what are we? And as I said in the morning service introducing my books, come tonight, you'll hear a perspective of a kind that is not common, that I believe is definitive and God's own position and his own reality.

And where is it less understood or experienced or known? But the church itself, because the church itself is becoming a culture. And so where is that reality to be found? In the nexus of the hard, demanding, challenging, cross-inflicting thing called relationship with one another in the church, as the church is called to be the ground and pillar of the truth. And we need what comes to us from one another in order to obtain and to maintain that reality.

Truth, authenticity, reality are all words. It's like holding up a jewel and turning it to catch another facet of light. But to know that there's a heavenly reality that God is after in the earth, and that probably it's this very thing that is calculated to move Jews to jealousy.

For what are they not themselves capable, even without the Holy Spirit, by their own giftedness and expertise? In fact, they are the dream factory. They are the manufacturers of films and plays and all of the make-believe that the world thinks constitutes reality. So, we're after something of a heavenly kind that God wants established in the earth, and how like that to come out of the grit of the unostentatious, unimpressive, ordinariness of the related relationship of saints, one with another, on the frequency that is required both to obtain and maintain that, which is to say daily.

They went from house to house daily breaking bread. And if we're just confined to Sunday meetings in the hallway of the church, there's no way that we can find that reality, let alone maintain it. So, community, which is the intensive frequency of relationship where it's significant, where it counts, where it's costly, is the whole nexus for the reality of a kind that God wants communicated to the world.

But there's pain in obtaining that, as well as joy. Do you feel that one of the reasons the church hasn't seen the necessity to come into community in a truer fellowship than she's in in the present condition is for the reason that we've been inconsiderate of eschatology and of Israel, of end-times realities? Of course, I have a little statement that I was considering reading from Tozer, where he raises the question about modern eschatology. And I don't know his views, I've never read any of his views on that, but he's raising a question and saying, why is it that we have swallowed the eschatology of the last 150 years without weighing it up with the early church fathers? And he's saying we ought to be of the kind and of the grit and substance of people who will consider these things, not just because someone has taught them, but to go over the precipice and into the real search of things.

And as you were sharing this morning, the church has become illiterate, we've become lazy mentally and spiritually. Non-literate. Yeah, I meant to say illiterate.

There's even a flight from that which is verbal. We're literate for our manuals or our fashion magazines or cookbooks, but we're not literate in the sense of the delight in the word and meaning and mystery of meaning. So illiterate is to be a victim of poverty and you have no access to literacy, but to be non-literate

is to choose a flight from words and meaning and to go to that which is having to do with images and sensual opulent things for your eyes.

What was the word about amusement, how our brother pointed out to us, as you've probably heard or read, to muse is to reflect. And it never occurred to me, when you put the letter A before a word, it negates that word. Atheism negates God.

Amusement negates musing. Musing is to reflect and to contemplate, which is the soul distinctive of man. And so to amuse is to be robbed of any opportunity to reflect and just to see and to enjoy images and so forth and so forth.

And so we have a whole generation of young people who can hardly do more than grunt. Right. How much can we say that the church itself has been built on those grounds, especially in the Western world, that we have services that the thing is geared, as you say, often toward man and not toward a jealousy for the glory of God alone.

I'm often commending Oswald Chambers and now all the more Charles Haddon Spurgeon for their devotionals, Spurgeon's Morning and Evening, that has come to me as a recent gift. I don't have a word for it. Every day buoyed up in my spirit and brought it to such depths through a little insert of a morning's devotional or an evening's devotional.

And I'm commending it everywhere. And I'm saying to the people, not only for its content, but also for its style, the use of language. And I say, this is felicitous English language.

Well, they don't know what felicitous means from the root felicidad, I think in Spanish, happy. This is choice, use of words that our generation doesn't know. But writers of the mid-19th century were fluent and current in expressing something with a certain beauty and Holy Ghost elegance.

So I'm commending these men, not only for their content, but also for their form. But now the word eschatology, the church that is not eschatologically minded is ipso facto, not the church. And so the two great words that are incumbent upon any church that has any apostolic prophetic intention are the words eschatology and apocalypse.

And the two, I'm just reading this book where he says, if your eschatology does not have an apocalyptic character, it's not eschatological. So eschatology means the study of the things that pertain to the end. The end, of course, is the consummation of the age, the coming of the Lord, the king and his glory, the establishment of his long-awaited kingdom and the righteousness that shall dwell in the earth.

If that's not part of the defining consciousness of the church, that they're looking and anticipating that consummation, that conclusion, and that every present day is a movement toward that fulfillment, we're losing one of the most profound ingredients. So this book, I would say, has recently come into my hand. It's been in my bookcase, but my eye fell upon it.

I was so glad that it was there. The writer here is speaking about Paul, how Paul is described by a scholar that he cites as an eschatological person. It's not just that he had it in his vocabulary or it was one of his categories, it was what he is in himself.

He's not just eschatologically minded, he's a piece of what is eschatological, the sense of being called to play an essential role in the drama of the final days. Think on that. This is part of a definition of what an

apostle is, not only that he has an eschatological expectation, a movement toward a consummation in the end, but he's playing a vital role in the bringing of that end.

Well, that changes, then, the character of your every day. It's no longer routine or mundane or ordinary. Every day is being lived in that anticipation and actually hastens that fulfillment.

So if this is true of an apostle, what ought to be true of an apostolic church? That we have the sense of being called to play an essential role in the drama of the final days. And if we put this morning's congregation to a test or a poll, how many of you in this auditorium this morning feel that you have an essential call, period? Or is one Sunday like another, and a mere succession of days highlighted by a picnic, a birthday party, a raise from the boss, a vacation? How many feel that you have an essential call? And how can you have an essential call, except that it's a call that has its consummation in the final days? Without that sense, it's not a call. And it's a drama, not just a succession of one day like another.

Every day is a drama, and it is for me. There's nothing that's ordinary. Every day where I find myself or what I'm about in the Lord is charged with remarkable meaning, and I anticipate that.

And so it gives to life a certain content and intensity and expectancy that makes living living. And that's what ought to distinguish us in a church in the world that is of necessity required to drink and to play and to have its games and its amusements because it's bored. It's dull.

It has no essential call, no significance. And not only is this a drama, it's the drama of the final days. And there's something about the word final, finality.

What does that mean? Once it's concluded, that's it. There's no going back. There's no back to the drawing board.

Well, we missed it here, but we'll have another shot at it. That it's going to be final. Consummation means that our days now are all the more charged and how we have to walk blamelessly before him and careful in what we do and how we deport ourselves.

And that this is fundamental to Paul's apostolic self-consciousness. This has got to come into the consciousness of the church, not just as a category, but imbued into our very being. And even though we don't use the word eschatological, we breathe it.

Someone looks at us, there's something about our eyes that are distant, that are seen beyond this immediate scene. And that distant thing is the defining thing that makes this moment all the more real. And listen to this choice thing.

It is surely the overpowering sense of something epically new, of being recipient of a revelation which supersedes all earlier revelations in priority and authority, of eschatological urgency and responsibility, which explains how Paul the Pharisee could turn his back so fully on his chief heritage, the law. Well, there are a few things for which we need to turn our back that are not as significant or as worthy as the law. Paul had to be wrenched out of a Judaic context, which has everything to commend it until Jesus comes.

And even after Jesus comes, there's much to commend it. And yet if Paul was fixated in that Pharisaical view of the law, how could he be the purveyor, the bearer of the revelatory things that come with Christ? So the eschatological urgency, the things that he saw, were able to bring him out, as it says here, could turn his back so fully on his chief heritage, the law. There are things about which the church needs to turn

its back.

I haven't had time to think about it, but we can imagine. Its own traditions, its denominational distinctives, its middle-class priorities, its selfish lifestyle, its indulgence, kinds of things that we're talking about and fingering in the mode of life that the church lives, which is so resonant of the world itself. We have to turn our back.

But what would give us the power, what gave Paul the power to turn his back on his fixation on the law? It's the thing which he saw of the urgency of what is eschatological and is epically new. So the word epical, E-P-O-C-H-A-L, who knows what that means? What is an epical? If we talk, may tonight's message be epical for this congregation. There's a word epic, E-P-I-C, which means a narrative or a story, but an epoch, E-P-O-C-H.

I don't know how to define it. Paul saw something of an epochal, an apocalyptic view, an epochal, life-turning, world-consuming, world-affecting, age without end, and that's distinctive for him as an apostle, and it needs equally to be distinctive for us as an apostolic body. Do we even have the word in our understanding? What is an epoch, and what is epochally new for us that enables us to turn our back on things that are limiting and stultifying and bring us into the eschatological urgency that made Paul Paul and makes us the Church? Whatever that is, it needs to be found.

I just appreciated this remarkable paragraph, which is written by an English scholar, James Gunn, Jesus and the Spirit, a study of the religious and charismatic experience of Jesus and the first Christians as reflected in the New Testament. As it was with the first Christians, it needs to be with the last. Do you have his book on Paul? Yeah, I do.

I was going to say, I have a friend who studied the early church and went to school and studied his major was church history, and he said, leaving the studies and graduating, he said the main thing that stuck out to him about the early church writings and about the historical reflections on the church is the consciousness that they had of the imminence of the end. And he said it just, it stuck out that they mentioned that almost more than anything else, the end is near. And is that, that's exactly what you're saying, that the eschatological urgency that Paul was a possessor of, that each, every little small thing, every little tent that he was putting together, every speaking that he had, every time with the fellowship, whatever it was, it was a significant thing to him because the end is near.

And it was in his consciousness, which is to say it imbued his life and being and therefore reflected in every aspect of it. It's not just a category that you trot out on occasion. It's in the grit of your life.

And this book also talks about the consciousness of Jesus. What was his own awareness of himself in his messianic role, in his knowledge of the Father, in what it meant to be a son, in the anticipation of the cross? What consciousness did he have of these things that he did not have or was required in every moment to articulate, but it was imbued and affected every consideration? The church needs this kind of consciousness. Something needs to come into our willful thought and consideration that is there always.

And that will drive out lightness, irreverence, lack of seriousness. It will be the fertile ground for a right attitude and respect toward God, the fear and reverence of the Lord, the jealousy for his glory that is so foundational, and a right relationship to each other as being called together for the consummation of all things in the final last days. So what is the prophetic task? To inculcate that consciousness into a church that has no awareness of its desirability and might even instinctively refuse it and reject it, particularly if it

seems to threaten the established religious order.

So to find a pastor who is defensive of that order, that is willing to welcome the prophetic voice that raises this kind of consciousness, is very rare. I was speaking with Reggie about these issues, and he kind of was unfolding everything, his views, on the end. And I asked him, Reggie, what is it that you see that will bring the church into this? I mean, in the present state that we are, just looking around our own lives, the lives of believers that we're in relationship with, you just look and you see the lack of the sense of all the things that you're speaking of.

And his response to me was, it's the power of truth that will raise the church up, will set the church free, and bring them into God's perspective of these things. And I just, the power of truth, that was his answer. It was that short, and I wanted to know if you had anything, any insight that you wanted to elaborate or add to it.

I probably would have answered that question differently. I would have said that all of the things that we're considering are inextricably joined with the subject of Israel the Jew. And the fact that we don't have this consciousness, this eschatological expectancy, this sense of urgency that has reduced our days one like another, is in direct proportion to the omission of the significance of the Jew and Israel for the church in the last days.

That somehow God has put all his eggs in one basket, and that basket is Israel and the Jew. And perhaps he has chosen it not for the least of reasons in his wisdom, it's because it is so out of keeping with Gentile consideration. It's the last thing they would naturally be disposed toward, and yet it's the first thing in God's choice.

So there's been a neglect in the promulgating of the mystery of Israel to the church that it might appreciate its role in the fulfillment thereof. And if it's, once that thing is sown, it opens up all these other categories. They're all integral and related.

But if it's not there, then indeed we have a succession of Sundays, a succession of messages, church becomes increasingly an institution, a place for mediating blessing, and we've lost the whole real context of our distinctive call and what will require to fulfill it, which is namely the cross and the willingness to bear the suffering that will precede and bring in the glory of this consummation, Israel's restoration to God and to his purposes, and with it the submission of all nations to that nation sinful to them, the one they would have least chosen as being the ultimate mystery of God, for which reason the church was itself raised up. So whatever will communicate, that sense will work to bring the other things into being that define and make the church the church. Wow.

Do you think you could share a little bit about your time in New York, how things have been so far for the viewers? Yeah. Well, it's been extraordinary. I boast that we have no game plan, no agenda, no program, but just to be there.

And just being there for these past five months for me has been extraordinary. It's opened up a whole window on a world that I knew existed, but I had never ever understood or examined, namely the Judaic Orthodox world. And it's been a remarkable illumination for me.

I just cherish to understand how my brethren think, why they reject Jesus, how they perceive the church that is so much the basis of our conversation, and the remarkable disparity in differences and worlds apart

in our consideration. And yet, somehow, by the majesty of God, these worlds need to be reconciled and be made one. And I keep talking to them if they're tempted to throw me out, as they could have every right to if I'm looked upon as some subversive that was seeking to convert them, because the word missionary is so dread.

I said, please, I'm only trying to find a bridge of connection, because there's been no effectual relationship or even contact by these two great communities, evangelical and Jewish, the only two that revere the Word of God and the person of God himself, however differently we understand that. So I'm happy for whatever contact God is giving me, and he's giving me some rich contacts. One Orthodox rabbi in particular, whom I see every Wednesday for five hours.

It takes me two to three hours to get to him and another two or three hours to get home. Over \$15 worth of tolls and bridges and tunnels and whatever, it's worth everything. It's a prized, privileged occasion.

The man is so dear. And what he, in his integrity, what he represents and how jealous he is in his guardianship over it, and how much he sees what we revere as being the very threat. And when he looks at the history of Christianity, then he's well supplied with data to give credence to his view that all that we represent has been nothing other than a threat to Jewish life and has been a source of not only discrimination but actual persecution unto death.

And no matter how much I want to say or try to say, hey, I'm not connected with that. I'm out of the apostolic, out of the Hutterite, out of the, what's the word for them? The Anabaptist tradition that was persecuted by mainline churches that has no meaning for them. If I wear the word, the label Christian, I'm joined with those who have been the oppressor.

So our work is cut out for us and I'm benefiting by this rich exposure. And seeing dimensions in him and in this Judaism that are profoundly absent from the church, not the least of which are perhaps the most significant, is the issue of reverence and awe for God. There is a vestigial, intrinsic respect for God.

You know how the Orthodox will spell God, G-D, and when they read the four consonants, the Tetragabaton, that we translate as Jehovah, Yud-Heh-Vov-Heh, they don't say Yahweh. They don't say Jehovah. They say Adonai.

They cannot, it's not right to even to mouth the name of God. Only the high priest on once in the year and the high holy days. And that remains.

There's no more priesthood. There's no more temple. There's no more invoking that name.

And yet something vestigial remains as respect and reverence that is very lacking in the church. And I'm reading now from other sources, Martin Buba, other Jewish writers who speak of these things with such a depth that we might well afford to take some page from their books and not categorically cut them off as if there's no value to be found in their orthodoxy or that it's altogether suspect or threatens our legitimate faith. It can well enhance and deepen it.

So as you may know from the last message at our convocation, last time I talked about Jacob's well and Jesus was not too proud to receive a drink from a questionable Samaritan woman whose moral life was revealed in five husbands and one whom you now have is not your husband. And yet he would receive from her water, but water from a well. And so just symbolically and prophetically, what does that suggest? This Jacob's well, it goes down deep.

The waters may be somewhat stagnant and brackish, but there's something to be found there that even Jesus did not despise. And I think it will bring a quotient and dimension into our own present believing life that will enlarge and fill it beautifully. If we will receive it from the Samaritan Jewish people and not see ourselves as being required to circumvent them.

So pray for the further enlargement of that perspective that the Lord gave on the end part. Was the sense, it was the sense of that. And speaking of the end, you know, when we speak of the kingdom of God, I recently got a book by George Ladd called *The Gospel of the Kingdom*.

And he talks about the differing views, of course, between the different scholars, how they explain the kingdom of God. And his view, of course, is that the kingdom is expressed through the church now, but that there is a kingdom coming, you know, that is so significant. Was it Paul's consciousness, in your view, of that coming kingdom that made him different when he went to the synagogues and also to those who worship idols, that when he spoke, it either brought about decision or persecution? There was an ultimacy about his, every time that Paul spoke, that we're lacking.

Talking about words, the kingdom is so rarely spoken by us as present-day Christians. When we do, it's vague. It's an ambiguous word, the kingdom this, the kingdom that.

We do not think of it as Paul understood it in its political significance. What's the word that I use? Theocratic significance, that there actually will be the rule of God going out over the creation, over the nations, out of Zion. And that this is Israel's central call, that out from here, the nations will be affected, studying war no more.

Paul was steeped in that expectation, and we have lost it. And it's not just a kingdom, it's the kingdom of Israel, it's the Davidic kingdom, it is established on the throne of David, but it's in keeping with the character of David, which is the picture of Jesus himself. If we understood that and called ourselves already the citizens of that kingdom, how ought we to be deporting ourselves? How are we showing this Davidic influence? How much are we welcoming the authority of that Davidic king presently, that our government should be upon his shoulder? When I hear Christians making decisions for themselves, they're going to retire, they're going here, they're going to buy this, do that, without so much as consulting the king, I'm astonished.

And I think it's that laxity that perhaps hinders the very coming of that reality, if it's not to be found presently in the church. So the sense of kingdom, not just as an ambiguous little thing that has a kind of flourish in the sound of it, but the theocratic rule of God from the throne of David forever, so that the earth be filled with righteousness, that is so to be desired. And because we expect it, we already now presently reflect it.

And so our church would be more a reflection of a kingdom to come, and already is to the measure that we're walking in that reality, which is to say, to be apostolic. So could it be that the church in its present constituency has not been able to develop into a maturity of considering the kingdom? Because when you refer to the kingdom, you refer to some statements in the New Testament, but mostly to the prophets. And it's almost always dealing with Israel.

And the church has not been willing to consider the purposes of God for Israel. There's no consideration of the kingdom that exempts Israel. The kingdom, is it time now to restore the kingdom to Israel? His own disciples asked him, and instead of berating them for their narrow nationalism, he said nothing of a

disrespect.

It's not time now to consider that. First, wait in Jerusalem. But he did not discount the question.

The question was absolutely valid within the context of Scripture and the prophets. Yes, there is a time for the kingdom to be returned to Israel, not in the narrow sense that it might have been understood, but in the larger sense as a kingdom that will affect all nations, and all nations will come up to it. And those that will not, still holding on to their gentile pride, will suffer penalty if not cursed.

Rain will be denied them. They've got to respect, honor that people in that nation that God has called, and out of whose eye and his law shall go forth. That has got to be one of the fundamental components of Christian consciousness, if the church is to be the church.

I heard you say once in an interview, the church that will move the Jew to jealousy will be a martyr church. And just what you were saying, that you wince when you hear a believer saying, well, I'm going to retire, I feel like going to this college, so I'm going to go here. Is it that ultimate lordship that the Jew will see in the body, that they're under the Messiah with such submission and such moment by moment humility and waiting before God, that that itself is almost a preliminary demonstration of the theocratic kingdom? Yeah, and that martyrdom will not be a last moment's consideration.

We have to take a deep breath and bear it. Right. But our whole life has been a martyr life.

Our whole life is the giving up of self-interest, so that when the final requirement comes, we've already made it. As we see from the first martyr, Stephen, he's hardly aware that his life is ebbing away. What is he aware of? Lay not this unto their charge.

What kind of a consciousness is that? Isn't the man mindful of his own existence, and he's suffering that for righteousness' sake, telling these rulers of Israel what they needed to hear? There's not a sense of self-pity. There's not a sense of recrimination. There's not a sense even of personal loss.

Lord, lay not this unto their charge. And having said that, he fell asleep. And here's the soul watching this busboy die so magnificently.

Well, I think that's a preview of things to come, when the church of the last generation will be willing again to be martyrs, not at the hands so much of the world, but maybe out of the hands of outraged Jews who misconstrue us, and in their fury, inflict that upon us, yet we're willing to bear it. And in that, the Pauls among them will see the nature of very God, for martyrdom is what the Lord himself is, as was demonstrated on the cross. So I think we're moving toward that, but our present selfishness is hardly a preparation for martyrdom, the willingness to relinquish and to lay down.

I just read somewhere about lowering the bucket into Jacob's well. It came out of one of my devotional readings, and the author described the bucket as self-interest, religious ambition, vested interest. Unless we're willing to lower what is significant to us now, we can't bring up the waters from that deep.

So any lowering, any going down, any letting go, any relinquishing, is part of the anatomy of martyrdom, and only to the degree that we're willing can we bring up something of those precious waters. So it's to the degree that we know, moment by moment, martyrdom, that we actually have the capacity to draw from the life of God himself. In that, I read Oswald Chambers this morning, and ironically I thought, possibly ironically, he quoted from Ezekiel 37 today, and he was talking about basically the church that makes its

own, or the believer who makes its own bones live, as opposed to remaining in death and allowing the Lord himself.

So he wasn't really talking about the way that you expressed it, he was just bringing a practical point to the believer. But how does that tie in, that the church that has that martyrdom, that is martyred, living martyrs, or martyred physically, they're the demonstration to Israel of the end, and of the same thing that will take place, that you often share with Ezekiel 37. The very nature of their own God, which was explicated at the cross, is again expressed in their own willingness to suffer unto death.

And not just in some grievous way, this isn't some sickly, morbid, perverse psychology, this is with rejoicing. Counting it all privilege, can you imagine? What kind of a person is that? What kind of a church is that? That counts it privilege and is rejoicing. Not that they have to go out to provoke martyrdom, just to live the life of Christ who will necessarily bring it.

And that we count ourselves privileged to bear it, whatever measure. Not just in a final moment, but in all our moments. Well, I'd like it if we could pray for that church before we end this interview.

I'd like it if you would lead. So precious God on high, look at us, Lord. We're so far removed from these considerations.

They don't even ring, my God, with a viability as if it's within the realm of possibility. It is at such a distance from our current mode of thinking and being. And that is celebrated everywhere as being the best expression of the church.

So we're asking your mercy, Lord. We're asking the revelation of yourself and your way. We're asking, my God, that you would grant us a glimpse of the mystery of Israel that would encourage us to be willing to yield, to relinquish, to give up those things, my God, for their sake, which is for your sake.

Bring us into that relationship with that people, Lord, who will not understand it, who will resist it, who will misconstrue and misinterpret it, who will be vexed with us as they were with Stephen, as Saul was with the heretical sect called Christianity, and will seek to oppose it, if not to persecute it. And yet how we will bear that reproach, how we will bear that conduct toward us is the very revelation of yourself as it was in bringing Saul to become Paul. And we're willing, Lord.

Thank you that we have an anticipation of the end as it was already given at the very inception of the church's history. And thank you for these words, Lord, in time of sharing, and pray that it will be encouraging and helpful to saints as they consider, Lord, what we have been discussing. We bless you, Lord.

Thank you for your brooding jealousy, your love that will not let us go, and will bring us, my God, to the desired place. Bless your church. Bless your saints.

Take from them the fear and the dread of martyrdom. Bring the cross, my God, back again as the focal point of consideration for the church that is the church, not a dread thing, a glorious thing, and a privileged thing to the degree that you would have us in any way to bear any portion of your sufferings in these last days, knowing that there's a suffering that precedes a glory. So jealous are we for that glory.

They will count that suffering light and momentary, and know that whatever measure we bear of it has come through your sovereignty as the king enthroned in the heavens even now. So bless this, Lord, and

let it serve your precious kingdom purposes, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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