

Ezekiel 37

by Art Katz

God's plan for Israel's restoration requires Israel's failure and the church's understanding of God's mercy and its extension to Israel.

Duration: 58:40

Scripture: Isaiah 60:21, Ezekiel 36:31, Ezekiel 37:4-6, Ezekiel 37:20, Zephaniah 3:12

Topics: "Israel"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on a conversation he had with a former Marxist who showed him kindness and patience. The speaker was intrigued by the person's constant mention of the love of God. He admits to having a hobby of debating and defeating Christians, but this encounter challenged his perspective. The speaker emphasizes the importance of the relationship between the church and Israel, stating that they are intertwined and necessary for God's purposes to be fulfilled.

Transcript

I think that's an appropriate name change, all the more as my topic tonight is Israel. And not to be something spoken from the point of view of vested interest being Jewish, or to appeal to your sentimental interest, or to the mystique of Israel, or your sense of guilt or obligation for what we owe to this people who have given us the Bible, the apostles, and all of that. But a totally different perspective, which, for the want of a better word, I'd like to call an apostolic perception of the issue of Israel, and one that I can freely commend to you if indeed we have serious intention of being an apostolic and prophetic body, which is to say to be true church.

There's something that needs to be fitted into our end-time perception, and it is the issue of Israel, so central, in my opinion, to the final and consummating purposes of God that profoundly involve the church. How's that for an opening statement? Having said that, I'm going to sit down. Having said that, hopefully to intrigue you, and to open your heart in understanding for which we have been praying today, because this is so enormously important, that the issue of the Jew and the issue of Israel is, in fact, at the end of the age, as it has been, in my opinion, throughout the ages, the issue of the church, that God has locked these two entities in to a reciprocal relationship, that the one without the other cannot come to its fulfillment in the purposes of God.

I'm just throwing these statements out. I don't expect that you will be able to say amen at this point, but just to make statements, and that perhaps by the end of the message and after you've reflected upon it,

you will then be able to give a hearty yea and amen. Let's look at Ezekiel, Chapter 37, as the basic text of tonight, though I hope to turn to some other scriptures as well.

The Valley of Dry Bones, familiar to most of us, and then we'll pray. The hand of the Lord was upon me and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord and sent me down to the midst of the valley which was full of bones, and caused me to pass by them round about. And behold, there were very many in the open valley, and lo, they were very dry.

And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. And again he said to me, Prophecy upon these bones and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live.

And I will lay sinners upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded, and as I prophesied there was a noise, and behold, a shaking, and the bones came together bone to bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinners and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above, but there was no breath in them.

Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophesy, Son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceedingly great army. And then he said unto me, Son of man, These bones are the whole house of Israel.

Behold, they say our bones are dried, and our hope is lost, and we are cut off for our parts. Therefore, prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my spirit in you, and you shall live, and I shall place you in your own land.

Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord. So precious God, we ask a grace of interpretation by the Holy Spirit. Your rendering for us, whom you have collected, gathered tonight.

Grant us some sense of what this means in your own sight. Use it to awaken us and bring us from our grave of indifference and ignorance, even hostility against Israel. Bring us to life, my God, in something that is dear in your own sight and that should rightly affect every aspect of our faith.

Help us to be the instruments of your use, my God, in the effecting of this, that you might be glorified thereby. Come and give us the breath of life in the speaking, hearing, and responding that we might see, my God, this chapter fulfilled in your time to your eternal praise and glory. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. So two requests. First, to borrow some water from my dear interpreting brother down here.

My topic tonight is to interpret Israel's present calamity. One that we have not only been aware of, but one that has caused us, who have been supporters of Israel, no little dismay and concern. Israel's conduct has been a disappointment, not only to us, who have hoped that we would see a nation of a unique kind in the fulfillment of the prophetic word, but has been a disappointment to themselves.

It has disappointed jury the world over, and we are only at the beginning of what shall begin in disappointment and end in a much deeper but unnecessary mortification. And all of this is not mere happenstance. I believe it is the very hand of God and necessary for the ultimate and the true fulfillment of God's intention through a restored, or shall I say, a resurrected Israel.

How quick we were to applaud this present Israel, and how disappointed we were that by its 40th anniversary, when one could have hoped that we would have seen the fulfillment of things hoped for, that indeed these calamities were already beginning to unfold. Things that could not have been anticipated that brought Israel to such a place of confrontation and distress that in the necessity to defend itself or even to perpetuate itself, its existence, it found itself increasingly required to act in ways that were distinctly un-Jewish. And if we have celebrated anything as Jews historically and probably would have continued the luxury of that celebration, it was the sense that we had something unique going for us of a moral and ethical kind.

It's the kind of thing one enjoys when one is not really tested. But when the test came, we found ourselves horrifyingly capable of a conduct that we ourselves would have condemned and have condemned when we ourselves were the object of that conduct, as for example, when it was perpetrated upon us by our enemies and more recently by Germany in that Nazi period. We're acting now, ironically, in a way that is too fearfully close to what we ourselves experienced.

And it's a predicament and a crisis, a moral one, of which I believe God himself is the author. Now, is that to say then that this is a final demonstration and proof that God is finished with Israel and that Israel is showing its true colors and is not what it hoped to be as a demonstration of a Jewish nation and a Gentile world and what we evangelicals had hoped for it to be and therefore it's the final and concluding proof what some critics have all along contended in an issue that has been raised from the church through the time of Paul, is God finished with Israel? Is this the conclusive evidence? And the answer is, of course, God forbid, no. That Israel does have a destiny, but it is not to be revealed in its own achievement, but lies exclusively in God's faithfulness to his own election and promise by his own power.

That if we could but understand Israel in its failure to be the nation that it hoped in a generation, what a colossal success that would have been in 40 years to resuscitate a dead language, to establish a whole civilization, to become one of the formidable military and technological powers in the world despite the sparsity of its numbers and came within a hair's breadth of succeeding. And had it succeeded, what would have been celebrated? Not God, but the ability of this most unique people which was never God's intention. The whole purpose of Israel as a witness nation is not to celebrate itself, but it's God.

And therefore, he could not allow it to succeed on the basis of its own prowess or expertise, but allow it to come teasingly close to that kind of fulfillment only to have the bottom abruptly fall out through calamities of such a kind as no one could have imagined. So the fulfillment of God's intention for Israel waits not upon its demonstration of its virtue, but the final exhaustion of any capability it might have had in itself, humanly speaking, to be the Israel of God. Israel's failure to establish herself as a righteous state and as an example to the Gentile nations is her very witness to this fact.

Of course, she doesn't understand. She doesn't have our privilege of the illumination of the spirit and being the kind of secular and non-biblical people that she essentially is except for a small minority, does not take Ezekiel 37 seriously and has not seen her present plight in the light of the prophetic scriptures. That's a real irony and a truer statement of its real condition as a nation.

Utterly secular and seeking by its own prowess and ability to extricate itself from its own predicaments and will not succeed. We who love Israel need to brace ourselves and anticipate an increasingly deepening crisis unto death. And I don't know how literal that death will be, but I believe that Ezekiel 37 is something that points to and makes clear the necessity for that kind of death, that he might raise them up out of their grave, that they might know that I am the Lord.

That is reiterated in this text in verses 6, and you shall know that I am the Lord. In verse 13, and you shall know that I am the Lord when I have opened your graves for my people and brought you up out of your graves. And verse 14, and shall put my spirit in you and you shall live and I shall place you in your own land.

Then you shall know that I the Lord have spoken it and performed it, saith the Lord. To know the I am and to know the Lord is to know a God who performs something because he has spoken it. That what takes place is not the result of your endeavor and your ability, but the power of a God to fulfill his own word in the very face of your utter and dismal failure.

And if we don't know God that way, we don't know God. For he's a God of resurrection from the dead preeminently. That's the way Abraham had to know him in order to become the father of many nations.

It's the way in which the church is required to know him. Or we do not know him at all. And if we do not know him and Israel does not know him, how shall he be made known? As he in fact is.

So you who have clucked your tongues only too happy to see the disintegration of the hope of Israel or those of us who have waxed melancholy and unhappy at the sight of their vexation and crisis that requires them to display force in a way that is characteristically un-Jewish and contradicts the very aspiration of Israel to be a moral example to the nations need to understand the deeper significance of this crisis again of which God is the author. Our very failure as the church to understand it by clucking our tongues or wringing our fingers shows that we have not truly understood God. That the hope to see the fulfillment of Israel in 40 years as the prophetic messianic state is really an expression of our own impatience our own immaturity and our own lack of understanding of the centrality of the cross and of suffering in the effecting of the things that are enduring and eternal.

In a word what we wanted charismatically for them was what we want for ourselves a quick fix. And the same people who thought that the charismatic movement was the spirit being poured out on all flesh and thought that we had arrived are equally the candidates to believe that this Zionistic state largely the work of man was itself the fulfillment of the prophetic scriptures. That's not to say that there's not to be such a fulfillment but it's a process much more painful much more excruciating much more demanding much more requiring the supernatural demonstration of God than we had understood.

Then you shall know when I the Lord have spoken it and performed it saith the Lord and I shall place you in your own land. I have a growing suspicion that my own people have placed themselves and if anyone is capable of that it is we. Through our own funding through our own strengths and energies and ability that's not to say that God was not present and even giving an assist but it was an assist in order to bring us to a final demonstration of our own ultimate incapacity to establish our own state.

That must be demonstrated if the Israel of God is to be established by the power of God in the knowledge of God that he might be made known to the nations in the fulfillment of their calling spoken of in Romans 11 that is without repentance namely to be a nation of priests and a light unto the world. A Zionistic Israel

that would have succeeded on the basis of its own merit and its own strength could not have been that light but that it was necessary for them to experience that failure that out of the ashes of that death might come the resurrection of the true Messianic Israel by the power of God was a necessary prelude in my opinion because Israel is his witness people all the more in their apostasy and undeservedness that it might demonstrate to the nations that I am is who I am and when he will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy he will have mercy independent of the stinking track record and failure and apostasy of that people in their undeservedness. Can you understand what I'm saying folks? This is not an anti-Semitic diatribe.

This is an understanding that to be the true witness nation is to display God in his essential character which is his mercy and that his mercy can only be mercy when it is extended in total undeservedness to a nation that has blasphemed him in every place where they have been driven and even now in their conduct required in their own perpetuation does not honor God and that God will bring mercy to that people and bring it in such a way that it is recognized by all nations that not only will Israel recognize that I the Lord have spoken this and have performed it but the nations themselves so spectacular so powerful and so supernatural will be the God who establishes Israel in the land when he will do it according to the word that he has spoken. So the issue is not the glorification of Israel but of God a God who through his own goodness prompts him to act as he does and as the recipients of his undeserved grace and mercy they become most profoundly the witness unto him. And if anybody has his head screwed on right tonight and is hearing this can say, you know Art you might as well be describing the church.

Exactly. If we are not the witness of undeserved mercy what are we witnessing? And in fact it's the failure to deeply comprehend that that incapacitates us to play the role that God has designated for us in bringing Israel from its grave namely that by our mercy they might receive mercy. I want to say tonight that I have very little confidence that in our present condition as the church at large that we have such a handle on the mercy of God that we are so conscious of being the recipients of his mercy that we are in any condition to extend it.

But I want to say that the time is not far when we're going to come to an historic moment that if we don't know that mercy as we should and are not able to demonstrate it to this people it will be a colossal failure of a schema that God himself has established by which he is to be glorified through Israel in its... through the church in its extending of mercy to Israel that it might be restored. I think we're going to see death in such a form not only to those that are in present Israel but to a jury throughout the world that a increasing global fury of anti-Semitism will come of such a kind that Jews will be driven out of their places of affluence and security and safety to find themselves again refugees in the world. Whether there will be such a death in Israel itself of a military kind and a conflict with its militant Arab enemies of the kind that despite their proud boast never again they shall find themselves driven again out of the land and into the nations I can't say but I'm preparing myself for that eventuality.

Whether it's that or not I expect a calamity of increasing proportion to come upon this people to bring them to a place where as this text says they themselves say we are cut off we are dry bones we are without hope. And I ask any of you in this audience tonight who have any knowledge of Jewish history or of my people presently if you can tell me a moment when we have ever nationally acknowledged that we are without hope. If anything we are the perennial optimists not in God but in ourselves.

And if we can come out of the Holocaust with a tattooed number on our arm and a shredded shirt and nothing more and within a matter of a decade or two establish our fortunes in such a way as to make the

Gentiles envious who are round about us. What will it take to bring us to a place where we ourselves acknowledge that we are cut off and that we are without hope and that we are as dry bones. Because God is waiting for that acknowledgement.

And when he comes he commands the prophet to speak that their graves might be opened that they might come out of their graves and become an exceeding great army. So the church which should have known better would be less critical of Israel if it understood about itself that God does not receive us for any worthiness on our own part. How much of her disappointment with Israel is predicated on a false premise and hope of an idealized Israel that we have been fascinated by by the energy of this people and their ability to raise themselves up in a generation.

Which is really a statement of the projection of our own vain hopes and perception of ourselves contrary to the whole tenor of the gospel that rests on the issue of death and resurrection. Necessary for Abraham necessary for Jesus but somehow not necessary for Israel or for ourselves. That the thing that endures exceedingly and eternally is what is raised up out of death by the power of God.

And that there's something about death that even we who celebrate the doctrine of resurrection don't want ourselves to taste in our own experience and therefore did not desire it for Israel either. We wanted a glibber, easier, more facile success. But God is not accommodating our shallowness.

He must perform what he must perform that he might be glorified thereby. For nothing demonstrates the glory of God more than to take something that is abjectly and totally failed unto death and to resurrect and to raise that to a newness of life. Not the Israeli that is marked by its chutzpah, its arrogance and self-assurance which would have impressed many of us and has.

But a newness of life that displays the very character of God in the humility and brokenness out of which God will raise this people in the profoundest repentance that has ever come to any nation on earth. Consider for example in Ezekiel where it says that when they see him that they shall mourn they shall be in bitterness for him as one is in bitterness for one's firstborn, every family apart. It's just a faint stroke of God's brush but it suggests a national repentance of such a kind that has never been demonstrated by any nation on earth.

In Ezekiel 36, verse 31, then shall you remember your own evil ways and your doings that were not good and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Zephaniah chapter 3, I will also leave in verse 12 in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity nor speak lies neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth where they shall feed and lie down and none shall make them afraid.

This nation's character is going to be so transformed by the remarkable dealings of God that brings them to a death of their own celebration and raises them up to a new character of life that the nations themselves will rejoice with the blessedness that comes to them through so transformed a people. At that time I will bring you again in verse 20 even in the time that I gather you for I will make you a name and a praise among all the people of the earth when I turn back your captivity before your eyes saith the Lord. The verse before it I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.

My people also shall be righteous it says in Isaiah 60 verse 21 they shall inherit the land forever the branch of my planting the work of my hands that I may be glorified. A little one shall becometh as a thousand and a small one a strong nation I the Lord will hasten it in its time. Whereas thou hast been

forsaken in verse 15 of that chapter and hated so that no man went through thee I will make thee an eternal excellency a joy of many generations.

We can see that scenario being played out now. The increasing distaste of nations for Israel those who formerly honored Israel those who had put the stickers on their bumpers for Israel and then took them off at the first oil crisis. That something is happening that Israel that was once celebrated as a David among Goliaths is increasingly losing its favor among nations and a growing distemper of agitation and disquiet toward Israel to the point where a hatred will be developed in an Israel that will not hesitate to use any means for its own perpetuation to the moral dismay of nations who expected better of her.

This is in fulfillment of the scripture. The pity would be that we should find ourselves among those who hate her in our disappointment in her failure when we should have understood that that very failure was needful and was spoken by God and needs be fulfilled. Now, it's interesting that God himself does not speak to the dry bones but he employs a prophet and commands him to speak.

A prophet whose very prophetic faith is stretched to the uttermost nigh unto breaking when God himself brings him by the spirit down into the valley of dry bones and makes him walk all around and in a sense rubs his face into the grim fact of the utter totality of this death unto dry bones bereft of any hope and then puts the teasing question to him. Can these bones live? If a prophet is known for anything it's prophetic faith. It's prophetic confidence.

It's prophetic knowledge of God. And yet, it's an extremity of such a kind that stretches even the prophet to the breaking that he can only answer haltingly Lord, thou knowest. I'll tell you that if his faith faltered that he employs a prophet and calls him the son of man.

Isn't that what prophet is? Aren't you looking at one, hearing one, who is utterly man, who sweats at the pores, who quakes, goes through all of the conniptions that adhere in the flesh like any man. He is ultimately man in all defect and failure and yet called, chosen to see, to proclaim the foolish things and to be half-jokingly instructed by the pastor before coming out on the platform. I hope you're not going to cause a debacle of such a kind that I'll not be able to clean up afterwards.

There's something about the prophetic calling that's, I don't know, I don't have a word for it. It's a mess and yet it's a glory. Son of man.

They're not little robots punched off the assembly line. They're flesh and blood and have a history in God and must experience the very things that they're required to speak. Can these bones live, son of man? Why is God so graphic? Why are these statements so penetrating? Because I believe that God is suggesting that there must come a time at the consummation at the age in these last days where if Israel is to be restored, because what shall her restoration be but life from the dead? Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness? For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead? Verses 12 and 15 of Romans 11.

And where did Paul get it from the same texts that we are considering tonight? As I shared with your pastor earlier today, we've been on this subject through the day, it's an astonishment how prolific the prophetic scriptures are about the restoration of Israel as a nation and the great redemptive purposes of God. And yet, how little conviction and understanding there is among God's people, how little anticipation, which is all the more embarrassing as I believe that the church is destined by God and has a mandate by

God to be the very factor that brings Israel's restoration to pass. That by our mercy they might receive mercy.

Have they stumbled at the age of fall? Paul asks in this chapter, God forbid. But through their fall, salvation has come to the Gentiles so as to move them to jealousy. When the fullness of the Gentiles be come in, then all Israel shall be saved as it is written.

Wherever we look in this great concluding epical chapter of Romans 9 through 11, God's centerpiece in the book of Romans, which is Paul's definitive theological and apostolic statement of the grand plan of God is the issue of Israel inserted. And I want to ask the church tonight, is it inserted centrally in our understanding? And if it's not, to what degree are we apostolic? What shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead? We can't begin to understand the impact that Israel's restoration will have for the nations of the earth. It will be the most glorious and global demonstration of God in his mercy that has ever been visibly expressed before the nations of the world.

And this Israel that is presently a threat to its neighbors and is a word of foreboding and dread by nations round about and even threatens the security of the nations of the world that are distant from it will be such a blessing as God spoke to Abraham as to bless all the families of the earth. A resurrected people coming in the meekness of the very nature of God himself who were formerly known for their belligerence and their arrogance and their military might. They come to the very nations whom they threatened and at the risk of their own life to make the mercy of God known to nations that would otherwise have perished.

It will be as life from the dead. I personally do not believe that it's the task of the church to evangelize the nations. It is to win from the nations a people for his name from among all nations.

But the task of the nations themselves I believe is Israel's as the first of restored nations to the nations that makes its ministry a life from the dead. And yet how shall it be restored to fulfill it if we fail in our function to be to it what God calls us to be in the extending of our mercy and of the making of them jealous though Paul says in the same book that they are the enemies of the gospel for your sake. What will it take and what kind of a church will it require to move this Israel to jealousy that has historically opposed the gospel to the point where Paul does not hesitate to call him the enemy of the gospel.

Whatever it is I cannot describe it but I'll say this it is more than that which we have known and what is charismatic at its best. Only an ultimate church in its apostolic and prophetic configuration in its maturity in its coherence in its true corporality in its true nature and intention of God revealing his light and his glory can conceivably fulfill this mandate. Now listen to this.

The question is will we be that church ever if we do not take that mandate seriously? I want to say tonight that God has given us that mandate not so much only for Israel's sake but as much for our own. If we did not have this stubborn obdurate and resistant people as the ultimate target of our outreach and the demonstration of the reality of our God we would have satisfied ourselves with much less standard and much less requirement. We would have measured by ourselves and unto ourselves did you like the meeting? How's the Sunday school? How's the program for the kids? Did you enjoy the preaching? How was the worship? How's the budget? All of these measures have infinitely to do with ourselves but God gives us happily a measure that requires us to some transcendent place just beyond and outside of ourselves and not just any people but this people who have historically been the most obdurate resisters of the gospel in all of their intellectuality in all of their stubborn character in all of their ability they are fearful in their resistance and he says now move that people to jealousy.

We heard prophetically tonight in the earlier part of the service that there's a grace that is available and a great grace that has not yet been given to the church because we have not yet taken this mandate seriously. It has been to the detriment of the Jew and it has been to the detriment of the church that we have sidestepped this most demanding of all gospel requirements that God even gives as a first priority that this gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes to the Jew first and also to the Greek. I can't say it as a thus saith the Lord I can only say it as an intuitive prophetic conviction that I believe that that is a requirement of the church in every generation and in every locality and which church at any time historically and presently could ever say but there are no Jews round about to whom we can go first as in God in his genius who has given the mandate also given us the potential for its fulfillment by seeing to it in his multiple way that in judging Israel and casting it out among all nations that there's not a nation in which the church is where Jews are not.

Why have we failed to honor the priority of God? Why have we failed to take the word of God seriously? Because intuitively I think that we're cowards. Because intuitively I think that we recognize this is too formidable and too demanding for us. And indeed it is.

As God is waiting for a witness nation not to demonstrate its chutzpah or its expertise he's waiting for a church not to demonstrate its ability but his. In a word the ultimacy of the demand that Israel makes upon the church brings us to the issue of death and resurrection. It is only our witness to them from the place of resurrection that can conceivably move them to jealousy.

Nothing that is religious however impressive or however charismatic will do it. In a word unless we ourselves are on the resurrection ground how shall they be moved to jealousy? It's just that we're a people with another set of religious priorities and vocabulary no more impressive than anyone else's or their own. Are you guys following me? Getting restless? No? Okay.

I'm giving you a compressed seminar in one night that should have at a minimum three speakings to adequately suggest it. The issue of Israel I want to contend tonight is the issue of the church and we're going to see that increasingly as we come to the end of the age and I believe that it's the issue of Israel that will indeed reveal who in fact the church is. And in our first speaking in these days we mentioned a remnant church a persecuted church and a larger religious body who will be its persecutors employing the same Christian terminology but bereft of its power who cannot tolerate the existence of that minority of the spirit.

And it may well be that the response to the hated people that the Jew will increasingly become in every nation will indeed reveal who that true church is. Because I'll tell you what folks even before this emergency comes and Jews are in that extremity and become yet more hateful and more despised it's tough even now to relate to them as we ought. There's something about a Jew in the wisdom of God that kind of has a tendency to rub a Gentile raw.

I don't know why it is but far from our moving them to jealousy they move us to envy. They provoke us by their success. We're irritated by their ability.

Their effortless seeming wonderment in the obtaining of fortunes or sailing through schools and getting their straight A's while we break our heads for a B minus. I'll tell you what it's an unusual Gentile who can witness this and not have in his deepest soul a little kind of enmity inculcated. In a word what I'm saying is that nothing from us humanly or religiously will fulfill the mandate to which we are called with regard to them.

That in a word the only church that will move this people to envy and have a mercy to extend to them is a church that is utterly transcendent heavenly apostolic prophetic true. And what I'm saying further is that we will never obtain that if we do not take the mandate seriously that compels us to find to obtain and to keep that ground. In a word we're locked in with the Jew in an inescapable symbiotic relationship where the one without the other cannot obtain to its fulfillment in God and God is the author and the genius of that plan.

Oh the depths of the riches pour Christ out. The wisdom and the knowledge of God who has been his counselor. I'll tell you that that ecstatic pain of praise that concludes the great chapters of Romans 9-11 has got to be a statement of more than the fact that God intends to save Jews like myself or Gary to be added to the body of Christ.

We appreciate that we love that there's an elect a remnant in every generation that God will add to the church. But I'm saying tonight that there's a weight a ponderous weight of scripture throughout all the prophets from which Paul draws to make his statement in Romans 9-11 that there's a destiny for Israel as a nation. A remnant nation not the same great numbers that exist today a decimated nation passing through a time of Jacob's trouble through which not all shall survive for he shall purge out the rebels from among them.

And I want you to turn with me to Ezekiel 20 to show you how close to home this program of God is going to come of which we are principal actors and if we fail in the role in which he has cast us we cannot hope for their restoration. I said I expect a global anti-Semitism and I receive publications from the Jewish community that testify to that. You need to know it.

That there's a rising crescendo of anti-Jewish hatred growing in every nation in the world and the lid is off in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and there's not only ethnic hatred surfacing but anti-Jewish hatred surfacing. That the conduct of Israel with the Palestinians has excited a dislike and a contempt and a hatred for nations as I've said that formally looked upon Israel in a fond way and even many Christians are growing cool because of the way Israel is disappointing them. This is God's program it's going to increase and there'll be no nation in the world where Jews will be exempt from a bitterness and a hatred and a fury directed against them to such an extent that it will drive them out of their present places of security affluence and comfort which is necessary to bring them to a place of confrontation with God in the wilderness of the nations which is God's stratagem for the majority of world Jewry in the last days.

Listen to this in verse 33 on from Ezekiel 20 As I live says the Lord God surely with a mighty hand and with a stretched out arm and with fury poured out I will rule over you. Remember the last official statement of the Jewish community? We will not have this man to rule over us. I will rule over you but it's going to take because of your stubbornness and your pride a fury poured out with a stretched out arm and I will bring you out from the people that's what we'll do it and we'll gather you out of the countries wherein you are scattered with a mighty hand with a stretched out arm and with fury poured out and I will bring you into the wilderness of the people and there will I plead with you face to face like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt so will I plead with you saith the Lord God and I will cause you to pass under the rod and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant and I will purge out from among you the rebels and them that transgress against me and I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn but they shall not enter into the land of Israel and you shall know that I am the Lord.

I want to be on record tonight and I pray that I'm wrong. I'd rather be dismissed as a false prophet. I'd rather be in error that my people would be spared what I suspect these verses mean in a calamity that

shall soon come upon them worldwide namely a fury poured out in such a magnitude of which the Nazi experience was a precursor and a foreshadowing of what will now become a global phenomenon even right here in River City.

If you say, but it can never happen in America. I mean, we're true blue. We're apple pie.

We're, you know, democratic. We're, come on you simpletons. If it could happen in the land of Goethe, Schiller, Beethoven, Fichte, Hegel, Nietzsche, Schiller in the land of a brilliant 2,000 year old civilization within a decade that the scum of its society can meet in a beer hall the rejects, the homosexuals, the occultists and take the reins of state in a reign of terror against this people do you think that we will do better? All nations shall come against Jerusalem to destroy it.

And the question that the true church of God needs now to ask and to prepare itself is this. Where shall we stand in that day? It's the question that the church in Germany essentially failed to answer and became the national church with the fewest photographs on its walls and silent and looking away at the decimation of the lost sheep of the house of Israel in their own midst. As a man who later came to the Lord told me, a German man who lived through that period in Berlin and knew many Jewish people as business associates I said, well, what did you do? He said, well, Artie, I looked out of my apartment window and I saw the brown-shirted Nazi youth beating the stuffings out of them and pulling the beards of these elderly Jews and breaking their store windows and I said, well, what did you do? He said, what could I do? He said, I pulled the shade down and I walked away.

I want to tell you folks, put this tape on the shelf and take it down periodically and have it in your possession before this decade ends. When God says that by your mercy they might extend mercy, he's not talking about some light piece of fluff that you can expend without cost. It will be a mercy that may require your life.

That to extend yourself to this despised people when they shall be hated of all nations and be driven by a satanic fury expressed as anti-Semitism, to take them in, to provide them a place of refuge, is to do so at the peril of your own life. And yet God says, there I will meet with them in the wilderness of the nations. In the offbeat places, away from the major cities and in little obscure places like La Porte, Minnesota or somewhere in West Virginia or in the desert someplace and in the many places where God has shown and is showing me now.

Little agricultural places that can sustain life, grow food, provide shelter are being already prepared by God as a network of places of refuge for Jews in flight in this very country now. The Lord's injunction that to avoid the mark of the beast that we should begin to ourselves in good sense and wisdom to anticipate and to prepare and look to the development of community in an agricultural base is not only a provision for our survival but may likely be theirs. This is his program.

I didn't make it up. There I will meet with them in the wilderness of the nations, face to face. I'll tell you what, they better see something more than what perhaps I'm looking out at tonight.

They better see something of the light that lightens the Gentiles which is also the glory of the people of Israel. You want to know something folks? Why I'm here tonight? Why I'm alive tonight? Why I'm in God's service tonight? Because 26 years ago as a man who was brought down into the place of death, fumptious, hot shot, arrogant, self-sufficient, conceited Jew, full of opinions, coming to the end of my own confidence in recognizing the paucity and the bankruptcy of my empty humanistic slogans, unable to

continue as a teacher having nothing to offer my students but to raise questions that I could not myself answer, took a year's leave of absence and put a pack on my back and began moving around in the Western world of which we Jews are so much the architects and the formers, looking for philosophical answers for what else shall an atheistic Jew seek only to find day by day in the book that is available tonight at the back of the room called Ben Israel which is the journal of that journey that there was a God looking for me, picking me up off the side of the road and bringing me into an encounter with another race of people, a new creation who were Gentiles yet not Gentiles, something transfigured in them, something transcendent in them whose faces shone, who had a word that penetrated my dark and unbelieving heart. And in the midst of this dealing in the city of Zurich, I meet this American high school girl just graduated and on tour as a graduation gift from her family, a Gentile of the Gentiles, a waspish middle class little snippet of a girl who should have moved me to the kind of anger and contempt that such symbols of Protestantism have always affected in arrogant New York Jews.

But I'll tell you what, there was something in that little girl that took the steam out of me. There was a simplicity and a transparency. There was a fearlessness.

Somehow we ended up spending the afternoon together walking the woods surrounding that city and I kept pumping her with questions as an ex-Marxist and ideologue who had taken on causes and yet can rub my heel into the face of closest neighbors and family. How come you've been kind to me? Oh, she answered, it's the love of God. How come you're willing to be patient with me? It's the love of God.

How come you're willing to spend this time with me? The love of God. If I heard the love of God and God one more time, I would have shrieked. And I thought, if this kid mentions God one more time in this afternoon, she's going to get it.

My hobby was to engage Christians in debate and wipe them out. So what was this little middle class Protestant from the Midwest to me? Sure enough, she mentioned God again. I said, okay, kid, hold it.

You're sweet and all that, but listen, I can't stand this God talk. Answer me one question that no Christian has ever successfully answered for me. You've been talking about God all afternoon.

How do you know that he is? I thought, ha-ha, got her. I'll get my steam engine all revved up and I'll crush the life out of her. I'm waiting for that hesitation, that spluttering and a choke and that she'll think of something clever she learned in Sunday school and I'll take it apart.

Without a moment's hesitation, she tilted up this little Gentile but not Gentile face and said to me with complete sincerity, Archie said, I know that God is. He lives in me. For a man who could not stand cliches, I went down like a struck ox.

That was not a cliché, though it could be in the mouth of others. When I got to my feet, recovering from the power of that statement, thinking to myself, what gave it that power? It was not theological, let alone intellectual. And finally realizing that the power of the statement was its truth and that she had the face to prove it.

I saw the light, the light in the Gentiles, which is also at the same time the glory of the people Israel and I want to say in the last day, folks, my Jewish people are not going to see that glory except in the light of your faces. And I will meet with them face to face. How can he be in so many places over the world where he's preparing these places of refuge and flight except that he has a people in them who so reflect him

that to meet them is to meet him for there they will come under the rod of his authority.

There's a real mercy that's going to be required of us and we better have it in a palpable and real way. You know, there's something about the Jew that flushes us out. There's something about the issue of the Jew that finds us out.

For those of us who subscribe to the correctness of the doctrine of mercy, how many of us are living effectually as Pharisees who believe that what we have received from God is proportionate to our good works or to our merit? Because when I say to you that God will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy, your first response to me is, but they don't deserve it. I'll tell you what, that says more about us as the church than it says about them. There's a reason why God has placed them in our path.

We need them as desperately and urgently as they need us. We're locked in and the one without the other can never succeed in the ultimate intention of God by which he'll be glorified. It's the issue of Israel alone that is most calculated to stretch the church and bring it to the ultimate faith and obedience and prophetic stature.

And here's the point with which I want to end. Who is that son of man? Who is that prophetic company whose speaking brings a nation from death to life? If it is not us, the church, in its final and ultimate prophetic configuration, whose speaking is more than a matter of opinion or a medley of voices, but a single unity and agreement formed by God that is authoritative and constitutes an event. Does your faith balk at this? Here's what I believe, folks.

We are on a destined course that requires us to come to such a place in God that our speaking in agreement in one mind, in one soul, and in one spirit with the full conviction of prophetic faith in the moment that God requires it as an act of obedience will be the issue of the life or the death of this people. If we choke and stumble and falter, if we are not in agreement, if we have people of varying voices and discord and disagreements, it will not be that singular and authoritative speaking that can raise the dead. How do we come to that condition from where we presently are in the medley of voices that we presently represent as the collection of individualities that we presently constitute? We need to come to a constituency of things that is corporate, one mind, one voice, but not by some process by which it's imposed upon us or some automation or some religious processing, but by the precious, sanctifying work of God that brings us increasingly to the agreement with Him.

That is the work of His Spirit. That as it took one voice in an Israel, in an agreement, in a moment when the priest blew their trump to give a shout that brought the wall down, that opened up the possession of the land, there's going to be an historic moment or a collection of moments where that kind of authoritative word must come from the church or it will not come at all. A word that is more than opinion and a word that is more than correct.

It's a word that constitutes event. It's a creative word. It's a prophetic word that only a people who have come to that kind of maturity and unity and agreement can speak.

We need to be on a course right now that will move us increasingly from where we presently are as the collection of individualities to become that prophetic entity in God that can respond to His call.

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