

Finn-02 Israel in the Last Days

by Art Katz

Art Katz's sermon emphasizes the critical role of the church in the prophetic restoration of Israel in the last days and the necessity for transformation in response to this calling.

Duration: 53:57

Scripture: Isaiah 49:4-16, Jeremiah 31:6-7, Matthew 24:14-15

Topics: "Last Days"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker expresses a sense of disorientation and detachment from his usual teaching role. He discusses the topic of the restoration of Israel in the last days, emphasizing that if the church truly understood this, it would be transformed. The speaker highlights the prophetic texts that speak of a future devastation and desolation in Israel's experience. He also emphasizes the importance of bringing Jacob (Israel) back to God and the extravagant love and purpose behind this mission. The sermon raises the question of what it will take for Israel to come to a place of absolute inability in themselves and be raised up by God.

Transcript

Good afternoon, Saints. You'll forgive me if I yawn and stretch and remind myself that I'm in Helsinki. And not in Amsterdam, not in Minnesota.

I'm in a special mood of strange unreality. So you'll have to bear with me. It has to do with my calling.

Teachers do not experience these things. This is prophetic disorientation. I don't even want to be reminded what the title is for today's talk.

I feel strangely removed from any obligation to honor it. In fact, I'm quite curious to hear myself today. What will the Lord say? How will He assemble His thoughts? How does one approach a subject as solemn as this? That if the church truly understood it, it would be transformed.

And unless it be transformed, it cannot fulfill it. Fulfill what, brother? The mystery of Israel. The restoration of Israel in the last days.

God's final historic act before His coming. That brings the release of His coming. Of which the church is His principal agent.

But a church of what kind? Not as we are presently constituted. But must become. Are compelled to become.

By the crisis of Israel. Have I lost you all? We need to pray. So Lord, we ask mercy.

Mercy for us to understand. Mercy for us to fulfill. That we might have a knowledge of Your mercy.

That there might be a real mercy that we might extend. That they might obtain mercy. And not the least mercy for me.

To express Your thought. In this first speaking. Which may be the last of speakings.

On this subject through me in this nation. Mercy, Lord, we pray. Look upon our frames and see that we are as dust.

And give us a measure of Your understanding. However much it conflicts with our own. Bring us from the sentimental plane to the apostolic plane.

We thank You and give You the praise. For such mercies. For Your namesake.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Now do you think I know where to turn? Somewhere in Isaiah.

Probably around chapter 49. Where I was reading this morning. Early.

Well I think the first part of that chapter. Describes Jesus as the servant of God. But there's a certain suggestion of ourselves also in that.

Surely the sense of frustration or defeat or failure. That is expressed in verse 4 of chapter 49. Something I have felt myself from time to time.

But I have said I have toiled in vain. I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity. That surely the justice due to me is with the Lord.

And my reward with my God. It's already a mystery. Is that compatible with your Finnish temperament? I don't think so.

You would rather have more precision. And clarity. Step one, step two, step three, step four.

I'm sorry about this. The subject is too complicated. Too rich.

It's the mystery of Israel and the church in the last days. So we have to allow the Lord to escort us on a journey. Of which I myself am ignorant.

I'm born up together with you. Carried by the spirit of the Lord. I know not where.

And I don't care. I can safely trust Him. Even if He will bewilder us.

Before we have an understanding. We have to enter into the sufferings of Israel. Even with our minds.

So it says in verse five. Now says the Lord who formed me from the womb to be His servant. For what purpose? To bring Jacob back to Him.

In order that Israel might be gathered to Him. I have never before ever commented on this. I have never before ever commented on this text.

This is the first time. And this text deeply affects me. How extravagant God is.

To bring forth a servant whom He has raised up from the womb. For this principle purpose. To bring Jacob back to Him.

How important must that be to God? And if that's true for that servant Jesus. What then of this servant? Arthur Katz. What then of you? Or do you think that there was another purpose for your creation? You see how much we need to be adjusted.

If this is not too much for the Lord. Then it must be also for us. And until we recognize it.

And say yes to it. We cannot be His servant people. We cannot be the church of the nation.

This is the purpose of God. His consummating and final purpose. It has everything to do with His glory forever.

To bring Jacob back to Him. This is more than just a sentimental thought. Though it's not free of sentiment.

God's heart is in this in an anxious way. But the issue of Jacob's return. Is the issue of God's glory.

It's much more than establishing a state. That would offer for Jews. A place of security in the Gentile world.

However much you may think we deserve it. You are not understanding the issue of Israel. Prophetically and apostolically.

You are thinking only sentimentally. Humanistically. And it's not enough.

The issue of Israel's return. Of which Zionist Israel of 1948. Is only the first preliminary.

And must indeed even pass away in its present form. It's not the issue of Jewish security or a homeland. It's the issue of God's glory forever.

God's theocratic glory. For out of Zion shall go forth the law. And the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem.

It is the Zion of God. The throne of David. The seat and the location of His kingdom.

His rule over the nations and over all creation. An honor that is given to Israel. Not because it is deserved.

But because it is given. Because He has chosen it. This theme is repeated in verse six.

Is it too small a thing that you should be proud of? Is it too small a thing that you should be my servant? To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel? I don't know how your Finnish Bible expresses this. Does it say raised up? It says bring back. Raised up is better.

Because bring back sounds political. Raised up is the language of resurrection. Much more suggestive of the glory to which God is about.

Raised up suggests something out of death. Into a newness of life. Not merely its continuation.

But in a uniquely new form. That must be Israel's experience. If it is to bless all the families of the earth.

Notice I did not say impress. Because that would satisfy you. You are so easily impressed.

You are excited in a soulish way for Israel's ability. You love Israel's Entebbe ability. No, I'm sorry.

I lost the train. Good. Thank you.

Sorry, you know that I understand English. Entebbe is the airport in Uganda. During the administration of that tyrant, what was his name? Idi Amin.

Idi Amin. When a plane, I believe it may have been French, was confiscated or taken by terrorists en route to Israel. A hopeless dilemma.

But the Israelis came with the loss of but one life. That of the brother of the present Premier of Israel. And they rescued the entire plane load.

I think only one woman was left behind who has never been heard of again. To whom, strangely, I am actually physically related. But the point is this.

Typical Israeli exploit. Full of daring. And ability.

If only we Americans had allowed the Israelis to finish the Iraqi war. We would not today be disturbed by Saddam Hussein. They would have done it right.

I know you admire this. This is what you would secretly desire for yourself. It's romantic.

Adventurous. And puts the entire premium on man's human ability. Which we Jews perform to the ultimate degree.

And by which we will never bless the families of the earth. Our ability is our greatest impediment to being a blessing. Our greatest strength is our greatest weakness to act as a blessing.

And that's the whole point. We must go down. Into nothing less than a death.

Of all of our political and Zionist aspirations. Almost brought to a hair breadth of fulfillment. Within the space of one generation.

Who else could have pulled it out so brilliantly. Until the Intifada. And the throwing of stones by children.

Was the beginning of the end. It was the beginning of the end. And this seems to be my last sermon.

So I'm not going to go too far this time. Into the lap of the dead. Where we say, we are the hope.

We are like the dead. It is a confession that Israel has never given in its history. Even during the Nazi era, when the Jews were killed, they were not allowed to make this confession.

And it is still a confession that must be made. And it raises this question. If the Holocaust of the Nazi time was not sufficient to bring us to this absolute sense of inability in ourselves.

To which Israel must come. If God is to raise it up. To which the Son of God himself was submitted.

A humiliation unto death. Before an exaltation. Above every name in heaven and in earth.

If the Holocaust did not obtain this. What will? And are you prepared for it? When it comes. For it must assuredly come.

It's called the time of Jacob's trouble. Daniel speaks of it. And Jeremiah speaks of it.

In chapter 30 and 31 of his book. And Jesus speaks of it. So let's turn to this authority.

In Matthew chapter 24. Where he is asked by his disciples what will be the signs of the end and of his coming. The time that we are now in and approaching.

He talks about iniquity and persecution. Verse 14, the gospel of the kingdom that needs to be proclaimed in all the earth. Then shall the end come.

And now verse 15. When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet. Stand in the holy place.

And let them that be in Judea flee into the mountains. Verse 16. Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house.

Which is on the roof, let him not come down to lift up what is in his room. And which is on the floor, let him not come back to lift up his clothes. You may be heavy and sick in those days.

But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, nor on the Sabbath day. For then. Verse 21.

Shall be great tribulation. Great in its intensity. Great in its magnitude.

It may have its inception in Judea. But it will not limit it to Judea. For it is the time of Jacob's trouble.

Wherever Jacob is. These afflictions will come. So great.

That it was as not since the beginning of the world, nor to this time, nor ever shall be. That means it must exceed the Nazi time. In its hatred and intensity.

In its relentless persecution unto death. In a geography that is not contained in Europe. And scientifically it will not be limited to Europe.

We have six million Jacobs in America alone. Wherever Jacob lives. This trouble will be.

How severe will it be? That except those days be shortened. In verse 22. There should no flesh be saved.

But for your lack's sake, those days shall be shortened. Are you ready for this? I don't know that I am. Although for 23 years we have been on the same farm property in Minnesota expecting this.

23 years ago God clearly and supernaturally spoke to us. That we will be prepared a place for Jews in flight. In the United States of America.

What shall it be in Finland? Or in any nation. When I say are you prepared for this? I don't just mean practically and physically. Although this is enormously important.

How shall we contain a sudden outburst of Jews out of Russia in flight and panic and terror? Who feel crowded even now in our own apartments and homes without that influx. In an anti-Christ time when to take such a one into your home is to risk the peril of their death. We'll see who loves Israel in that day.

Are we prepared for it psychologically? Spiritually. Mentally. Are we soft and brittle, fragile personalities? Someone looks at us the wrong way we're offended.

One wrong word we're depressed for weeks. Something has got to happen for us. Between now and then.

And then is not all that distant away. So pray for me as a messenger of the Lord. Who is preaching this solemn message everywhere.

Calling the church to come awake. And be alerted for the things that shall surely come. For which our mere sentimental affinity with Israel does not prepare us.

It's a call to apostolic stature. To the church becoming church. And not the mere assemblage of individualities.

The crisis of Israel compels us to be the servant people of God. Or else we would have been so satisfied with ourselves. And the success of our programs.

And the adjoinment of our services. We were formed in the womb. To bring Jacob back to him.

To raise up the tribes of Jacob. And to restore the preserved ones. The surviving ones.

The small number that shall survive these last days persecutions. And when we will do that. And be capable of that.

In all of its ultimate requirements. Then he will make us also a light to the nations. To the Jew first.

And also to the Greek. So that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth. How much God can say in so few words.

How evidently central Israel is in all his purposes. It's the first object of God's concern. But it's not the last.

Israel itself is for the nations. It's the standard that God will raise up for the nations. Where they will no longer be able to indulge their religious fancies and choices.

As if Hinduism and Islam are viable alternatives to the God of Jacob. And that day there will be only one God who is God. The true God.

Who judges his nation. And brings it down. Even unto death.

Of its own vain hopes. Its own Zionist aspirations. To be like all other nations.

And to be entitled to our own gambling casinos. And our own prostitution rings. Who have not the knowledge of our call.

Because you never told us. The reason for which we are chosen. As a light to the nations.

A nation of priests. And a light unto the world. Not how to pull Entebbe stunts.

And hit men of valor. But the priestly ministrations of the righteousness of God. The God who is God.

Who slays and makes alive. Who brings down and raises up. By a nation who does not know this only theoretically.

But out of the anguish of its own experience. Which is yet future. But near.

To which not one of them would survive. The preserved ones of Israel. The surviving remnant.

Who will return to Zion. As the redeemed of the Lord. Though they might not have left it in that condition.

And if they survive at all. Its because of you. In your corporate identity and strength.

As the church of the last days. Who is free from its own vain imaginings. And is not the subject of its own preoccupation.

For it was raised up out of the womb. To bring Jacob back to Israel. To bring Jacob back to him.

It's the purpose for your being. And who is sufficient for these things. And you know what your reward for that will be? Even from my Jewish kinsmen? Do you think they'll be thankful? Grateful? Admiringly? Far from it.

They will be bitter. Angry. Vexed.

At the suddenness of the affliction that shall again come upon them. Another holocaust. Unthinkable.

And of course who's to be blamed for it. As for the last one. The failure of Christianity.

The anti-Semitism of the New Testament. Don't expect gratitude. Or gratification.

Thanks and reward. It will be a thankless task. Which might offend you.

After you extend yourself at such peril. If you are a people who need to be recognized. Thanked.

Applauded. Esteemed. I think that those people who will be the most angry and bitter against Israel in those days.

Will be those Christians who will become most disappointed. At Israel's failure to become the Israel for which they had hoped. Though they were brought daily to an increasing disappointment and embarrassment.

When the best of Israel. Its orthodox intellectuals. Assassinate their own prime minister.

And shoot up an Islamic mosque in Hebron. And are celebrated as heroes by many in the nation. Who do not stoop at the employment of violence.

Even as Jews. This is not the kind of Israel for which we had hoped. And Israel itself is disappointed.

And must become so. It's a death to vain hopes. That any people could succeed in establishing their own country.

And their own national identity. Independent of the supernatural power of the living God. And says, I will restore you.

I will return you. From all the places to which you have been cast out. I will see that you are brought back.

Not by virtue of your ability. Or you will have none. But the nations will return you.

Their kings and their queens will bring you on litters and on stretchers. Bringing back the lame and the halt. Who were broken and disfigured in the very violence of their being ejected.

Bring back those who have been broken in the violence of their own country. Then you will know. That I am the Lord.

Who has spoken and performed all this. Wouldn't it be something if we could find one prophetic text that confirms this scenario? So we don't need to dig our heels for it. All the prophets speak of this.

Of a last days devastation. Of ruin. Of cities destroyed.

Of a land made desolate. That is yet future in Israel's experience. Look at this chapter.

In verse 14, Zion says, The Lord has forsaken me. The Lord has forgotten me. It's certainly going to feel like that.

Where the nation can cry out with its Lord before it, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? They must reiterate and follow the experience of the Son of God before them. But God says, I have inscribed you in the palms of my hands. Verse 16, your walls are continually before me.

Your builders hurry. What do you have for verse 17? It says sons and sons. Yeah, your sons will come.

My English Bible says builders. Which is not a mere arbitrary choice of a word. Because there will be a nation that will have to be rebuilt.

After the destruction that will come upon it. When your destroyers and devastators will depart from you. In verse 19, For your waste and desolate places and your destroyed land will become too cramped for the inhabitants.

Those who swallowed you up will be far away. This is Israel's future experience. And is being prepared even as we speak.

Has her safety and security ever been more fragile than now? Its condition more desperate. Its boasted Israel defense forces more weak and inept. Don't you subscribe to the Jerusalem Post? Didn't you read as I did that when this season of young recruits came to be inaugurated into the military service.

The chief of staff asked these brilliant young men who had been recruited, Where would you like to serve? Thinking he was going to hear what had been expressed in previous generations. We want to be in the elite forward troops. The commandos.

The paratroopers. You know what this generation answered him? Where they would like to serve? On the home front. Disaster saints is near.

Israel's condition is untenable. Israel's situation is becoming insurmountable. Indefensible.

In the view of military technology. By which even new rockets have been developed. Not just to threaten Kiryat Shmona on the northern fringes of Israel.

But to reach the suburbs of Haifa in Israel. With all kinds of sophisticated warheads. Gas.

Nuclear. Biological. Israel is without defense.

And God has seen to it. Its calamity will come. And it comes suddenly.

And many among them will be dispersed again into the nations. Yes, even beyond the rivers of Ethiopia and Sheba. When God brings them back, he brings them back, it says in this chapter, from Sinim, from China.

For the enemies that devastate them and destroy them. Want to propel them as far from the land as possible. Which God will allow.

As judgment. Righteous judgment. For a sinful nation.

Whose sins will exceed that of their fathers. Before their judgments come. Can you bear such words? Do you think me an enemy to my own people? They think so.

And not welcome back in the land. Where I was saved in Jerusalem 32 years ago. And have been going back year after year.

Where it was acknowledged that when Art comes, he brings the word of the Lord with him. Until he brings this word. The coming calamity of Israel.

That men don't want to hear. Don't want to consider. It's thinking the unthinkable.

Surely we have suffered enough already. Not enough to transform our character. And to fit us as a nation that will bless all the nations of the earth.

Our very attitude toward our enemy, toward the Palestinians and the Arabs. Is enough to show that. Why do you stagger at this? Why does this offend you? That God would go so far.

When you would have been content with Israel in its present condition. Hoping it would progressively improve. I hope that it will gradually improve.

For the humanist that you really are. It's because you did not take eternity into consideration. You were only occupied with present success.

And not the glory of God forever. In this chapter. In verse 19.

Refers to your waste and desolate places. And your destroyed land. One translation says.

Israel has become the land of our destruction. Not a Zionist state calculated to succeed. But a crucible calculated to destroy.

To purge. To refine. To cast out.

To sift. To bring back the redeemed of the Lord. The preserved ones.

The surviving remnant. For the redeemed of the Lord shall return. To Zion.

Everlasting joy will be upon their heads. They will come with joyful shouting to Zion. Verse 11 of chapter 51 of Isaiah.

They will obtain gladness and joy. When? When sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Israel's millennial destiny and glory.

Requires first this chastisement and purging. How foolish to say. How foolish to seek to comfort now.

Of people who have not yet experienced their affliction. Mourning and sighing must come. But it will flee away.

When God dries every tear. And enables Israel to experience gladness. They will obtain gladness and joy.

Not as reward for their virtue. For they have none. Nor has any man.

Not for their merit nor their acts. It is something given. By the God who raises the dead.

That they might attain it. Israel is man. In his self-sufficiency.

That must be brought down. That the Lord might be raised up. To be glorified forever.

Not through Israel's success. But through her failure. Will she be witness to God.

As God. Both in his judgment and in his mercy. That not only will all Israel know.

That I am the Lord who has spoken and done this. But all flesh everywhere. This is the apocalyptic drama of the last days.

Have we said yes to it? Have we agreed with God in it? Do we agree that his judgments are righteous altogether? Do we understand the necessity for death and resurrection? Who ourselves only know it dimly as doctrine. But not as the heart of our own experience. Anything that pertains to God's glory.

Must be resurrection phenomenon. We need to agree with God. And welcome our deaths.

To our sentimental and romantic views. That will be deeply disappointed. But once your sentiment dies.

God can give you the resurrection alternative. The unconditional love of God for Israel. The father's own love.

Which cannot be offended. That's enough for now. More than enough.

Let's pray.

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