

# Jap-02 the Confronting Word

by Art Katz

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*Art Katz's sermon confronts the self-centered nature of man-centered religions and emphasizes the necessity of a God-centered faith rooted in truth and evangelism.*

**Duration:** 1:05:50

**Scripture:** Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15, John 3:3, Acts 2:38, Romans 1:16, Romans 5:1, 2 Corinthians 5:17

**Topics:** "Japanese"

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## Description

In this sermon transcript, the speaker shares their experience of preaching the gospel at a university in Minnesota. Despite facing resistance and indifference from most students, they persisted in sharing the message of God's judgment. The speaker highlights the importance of the full gospel being expressed by the entire body of believers, rather than relying on powerful or impressive preaching. After the three-day event, some students were irritated and indignant, while others were moved to seek further conversation and prayer. The speaker concludes by emphasizing that the gospel has the power to provoke strong reactions and bring about salvation.

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## Transcript

A few nights ago I spoke on the subject of hell. It sounded at that time, I'm sure, to some as abstract and distant. But we learned this afternoon very abruptly that Betty's father has died.

And the issue of eternity became very real suddenly. My prayer is that this brother is with the Lord in heaven. Because in the moment of his death he'll learn the whole purpose of his life.

It is to be found of God. So I want to pray blessing on Betty's mother and on Betty herself to comfort them. That the Lord will use this death even to remind us of the eternal issues.

I want them to remember that through the death of Betty's father we live in the eternal world. Dear Jesus, you are the God of mercy. Without your mercy we would all perish.

It is hard for us to be a serious people. It is so easy for us to be distracted by the world. Bring us to yourself in a new way tonight.

Put your own burden in our hearts. Make us the people that we ought to be. But through us many shall be saved out of death in this land.

Have mercy we pray in Jesus' name. I don't offer myself as any authority on the Japanese mind or religion. Really I'm learning for the first time.

But the Lord has really been impressing certain things in my heart. I just want to review some of those things with you. This is just the point of beginning.

We need to examine this further ourselves. We need to have a deep understanding about the people to whom we have been called. So I just offer these few thoughts for our consideration.

The writers that I have been reading have spoken about Buddhism as a religion that emphasizes the benefits for man. The idea of praising Buddha was to obtain worldly gain and benefit. By this means calamity would be avoided and blessing obtained.

And this writer goes on to say that even today in the religions of Japan the promise of healing and sickness is the basic attitude which underlies all of Japanese religion. The desire for a life free from sickness, for a long life, for days filled with happiness, everything for the sake of worldly blessing. You say, brother, but what's wrong with that? And if you ask that question it reveals you.

What's wrong with this is that it is wholly centered in man. It is wholly centered in man. It serves the interests of man.

It does not consider God. It's a religion that is ordered for the benefits that men will receive. It is a self-worship.

A religion of convenience. An idolatry of self. The pity is that you can do this not only with Buddhism, you can do this with Christianity.

And probably the most alarming thing that is taking place in American Christianity today is just this. That our religion is becoming extremely self-centered. Faith is only the means by which you obtain a benefit.

Were you blessed? Have you been fed? In every question you are at the center. So little regard for the Lord himself and his glory. And this is my point.

So long as our own Christianity remains self-centered, how shall we reveal the false idols of other men? The alternative to man-centered religion is God-centered religion. Lord, what would you have for me to do? What reveals your glory? What pleases you? This has got to be true in our life, in fact. Because it's very easy to employ the vocabulary of Christianity and thinly disguise an essentially selfish life.

Our message will not exceed what is our own true condition. Buddha himself had this man-centered view. He was not interested in probing the mysteries of the cosmos.

He was only interested in man. Man was the center. And if there was conflict in the life of man, the conflict need not be solved.

You didn't have to get to the truth of the matter. The issue was not truth. The issue was how to set your mind to live with the conflict and yet be at tranquility.

The issue was not truth, but how to. It's a method. It serves man.

It's a religion of convenience. The object is to remove worry and anxiety. And the method is to so establish man's mind that he can live in conflict and yet be in peace.

So religion becomes a kind of a discipline or a method. But the issues of truth are never raised. Why the conflict? What's wrong with our human conduct that causes conflict? Is it the issue of sin? Are we offending against the righteousness and holiness of God? These questions are never raised.

It's the truth that sets men free. Not so ordering themselves to live in peace with a lie. These statements strike at the heart of Japanese culture for centuries.

It wants to eliminate from man the miseries of life by affecting a certain state of mind. The problem is not whether a man's conduct is good or bad. But how to save him from worry or anxiety.

Not to cease from sin, but to escape its consequences. This kind of religion is a lie. This is deception and escapism.

But something needs to be established in our own heart and understanding. However successfully a Buddhist may live through his lifetime in a certain kind of peace and tranquility, the moment that death comes, truth comes also. But then it is too late to change anything.

And one must eternally anguish in the lie. We need to understand these things. Not that we should show ourselves superior in our Christianity.

But that our hearts might be broken for men who are living in deception and bondage. The church needs to unmask that which is false. The fact that it has gone on for a long time does not sanctify it.

The fact that it has beautiful expressions like how to serve tea or arrange flowers does not change it. This is part of the deception itself. Which we are so quick to accept as being culture.

When its origin is out of hell. Born from below by the father of lies. This is egotistical religion that is centered in men.

How to reach this false tranquility and calm? How to subdue emotions? How to conceal anger or sorrow? How to suppress tears? Jesus said, I have come to bring you life and that more abundantly. True living is to live with tears, with sorrow, with pain, with joy, with love. They are eternally cheated and they are cheated in this present life.

The wages of sin are death both in eternity and now. In the book I read where it says, in Japanese society committing suicide has never been regarded as a sin or a shame. You want to know what ultimate egotism is? What does it mean to be a god unto yourself? It is even to take your own life.

Self-religion ends for many in self-murder. And the issue is not whether it's a sin, the issue is what is the manner in which the suicide has been performed. If it was done with appropriate calm, it is even to be applauded.

This is not a matter of culture, this is a matter of demon. This is deception in its ultimate condition. This needs to be unmasked.

This is false religion, false peace and it ends in death. It's man acting as his own god. It is ultimate idolatry and blasphemy.

This has been a characteristic of the religions of Japan. This ability to draw from this religion and that religion and to make of it some kind of a cultural way that suits the interests of men. This teaching, this religion, this teaching, and to combine them to appeal to people, this is what the Japanese are good at.

Therefore, the way of thinking of humans has an absolute position. There is no way of perceiving what kind of person god is. And there is no question of what truth is.

Do we ourselves recognize the satanic origin of these world religions? Or do we secretly admire them as culture? Or do we subconsciously say, this is a good culture? We need to press the word of god upon the consciousness of men. So I want to give you certain statements to help you in your own understanding. I have learned these things myself, so I would like you to refer to them in your work.

How can we approach men like this? What right have we to press upon them the claims of Christ? What is the basis for our saying that what we represent is more compelling than any of the religions to which they have given themselves? Because we need to speak boldly and with complete conviction. So I just very simply want to go over some very basic understandings. Something that you can present to men.

And as a foundation for your own speaking. In all of this world of conflicting religions, how do you insist that yours is the way? The first statement is that the Lord our God is one Lord. The first statement is that the Lord our God is one Lord.

I had a debate with a rabbi some years ago, and he took a different position. I had a debate with a rabbi some years ago, and he took a different position. He said that there are as many gods as men think them to be.

God is what you think He is. We need to insist that there is one God. It's not what each man devises in his own mind or opinion.

It's the God who discloses and reveals Himself. It's the God who says, I am that I am. I will be as I will be.

You cannot make me in your image. I make you in my image. You don't fashion your religions out of your mind around me.

I am the one God, and the faith is what I reveal it to be. I am the one God, and the faith is what I reveal it to be. God is not the product of our mind or our thinking.

God is the Creator, and He stands above His creation. He is not a convenience for man to manipulate and form and shape in ways that suit their purposes. God is God, and man is man, and that is the beginning of all truth.

That's the first statement that Paul made on the road to Damascus. He had a head full of Jewish rabbinical theories and opinions. He was very religious.

Intelligent and well-meaning. But deceived. And when the light came and revealed God as He is, Paul had only one statement to make.

Lord, what would you have for me to do? You come before me. Lord, what would you have for me to do? This is the profound and basic difference between the true faith and all of the world's religions. The religions of the world put man before God.

But the God of the Bible is the God who comes before man. In the beginning, God. And this God has revealed Himself in the Scriptures.

He is a self-revealing God. Philosophy and meditation or any exercise of the mind cannot produce Him. The natural mind cannot perceive the things of God, for they are spiritual.

The deep and the hidden things of God are revealed by His Spirit. And are freely given to those who will receive them. Can you see how this radically changes everything? Man can only receive, he cannot command.

God Himself must give. Truly He is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega. Do you know what's wrong with the world? Do you know why it's dying? I can sum it up in one statement.

The basic relationship between man and God is perverted. Twisted. And what is conversion? It is restoring the right relationship between man and God.

You say, but why has God appeared in history in Israel, in Palestine, the land of the Bible? Why didn't He come down to earth in Tokyo? Because that's not our business. It's not for us to say. It's not a matter for us to think about or to answer.

God is the One who can do what He wills. And so the birth, the advent of God on earth came in Bethlehem. And the angel said to the shepherds, But the same birth is peace on earth and goodwill to all men.

If it pleased God to be born into the earth unto which a child is born and unto which a son is given, it is not for us to determine either the time or the location. But the fact is that God has appeared. God has penetrated time and history.

And that fact has got to change everything for all men. This is not a myth or a piece of fiction. It is the most astounding fact of history.

Emmanuel, God with us. This needs to be emphasized with men. This event is recorded in a book together with the other events and the speakings of the same Jesus the Christ and the miracles that followed.

That book is the Bible. It's not a Western book. It's not a Caucasian book.

It's not a product of culture. It is the Word of God. Therefore we have the obligation to persuade men on the basis of the Word.

This is not my bias or my preference. This is God's very Word. It's not a product of earthly culture.

It is heavenly. God is in the Word Himself. In the beginning was the Word and the Word is with God and the Word is God.

We don't have to apologize for insisting upon the Bible. These things are written that you might believe. And believing has eternal life.

The unwillingness to consider the Bible and God's Word is rejection of God. It may be that you'll not be able to impress everyone to consider the Word. But you're presenting them with that opportunity is for

them crisis.

It's divine confrontation. And indifference to the Word of God is indifference to God Himself. What's the next point? The consequence of that rejection is costly.

Both in this life and the life to come. This faith is not an option. This is not another religion to be fitted in together with Buddhism and Shintoism.

It's the exclusive faith of God that cannot make its peace with other competitors. To reject the faith is to reject the life of the Son. If you will not believe that I am He, Jesus said, you shall die in your sins.

What then do we need to impress upon the consciousness of men? The whole purpose of your earthly existence is to be found of this God. Remember that the philosophers in Athens were always considering some new thing. They were always studying but never came to the knowledge of the truth.

It's still the same today, nothing has changed. But Paul made it very clear in one statement. God is made of one blood, all nations of men.

And He has established the bounds of their habitations. That they might seek after God if happily they might be found of Him. He said that He has established the bounds of their habitations so that all nations of men might seek after one God.

Paul said this as a message to the philosophers. The purpose of my existence is to be found of God. To have a relationship with God that will be eternal.

It's not to acquire possessions. It's not to have a brilliant career. It's not to accumulate wealth.

It's not to become famous. It's to be found of God. This is the whole purpose for human existence.

And for that reason God made the nations. Can you believe that? Can you really believe that yourself? Or are you taken up with the things that pertain to wealth, to fame, to health, to comfort, to pleasure? Are you a single eyed as Paul? When Paul spoke that one sentence it was like a knife in the heart. In the moment he spoke it those philosophers were convicted.

It made their whole life to appear false. And they recognized in a moment the truth of what he said. Not only because he himself believed it.

But because he lived as if he believed it. This is the key. Can we persuade Japan? The whole purpose of your existence is to be found of God.

Is it our whole purpose? Or one among many purposes? Unless we are single eyed about this. Unless we live as if it is true. We cannot persuade either the Greeks or the Japanese.

Can you see why our evangelism has been so weak? We say the right things but without the right conviction. This needs to be established deeply in our hearts. That we can say to men what I am expressing is not personal or cultural.

This isn't some prejudice on my part that is Christian. I come to you in love and in obedience to God. The God who says go ye into all the world and preach this gospel to every creature.

That's why I'm speaking this to you. It's not because I'm trying to show myself as being spiritually superior. I'm not trying to westernize you.

God knows you've been westernized enough already. But I'm compelled to preach this gospel to every creature. And as many as believe and are baptized will be saved.

You say brother this is a foolish message. It's not an intellectually commendable message. That God came down from heaven and lived an inconspicuous life for 30 years in a remote part of the world with a small people called the Jews.

That this man was God in the flesh. And somehow we had to suffer the torture that he did on the cross and die and shed his blood for us. That the father is so pleased with the quality of his son's blood that if we trust it he'll forgive our sins.

That God's answer is not how to learn to be tranquil in the midst of conflict. But to bring the source of conflict itself to the cross. That there's a power in this cross unto true liberation.

That if we'll be crucified and buried with him we will be raised with him to a newness of life. That if we'll be crucified and buried with him we will be raised with him to a newness of life. It's a foolish gospel.

God himself says so. But it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. Not too long ago, we went to the university right near where we live in Minnesota.

We were being obedient to God who called us to go there for three days. We stood out in the rain and in the cold and we spoke the foolish words of God. Most men didn't even want to listen.

They walked around us in order to avoid us. But we caught them in the dining hall and spoke for about a half hour about the judgment of God that was to come. Some of the men were trapped in their tables.

They couldn't even get out of the room. Within 15 minutes, students were going to the office and signing a petition to get us out of the school. They had never heard anything like it in the university itself.

The foolish preaching of the gospel about the things that pertain to eternity. After we finished, we went from table to table to talk with the students. What did you think? Most of them didn't think too much about it.

Some were a bit irritated and indignant. I came to a table where there were faculty members sitting. There was one man, the steam was coming out of his ears.

He was trembling with rage. Why, what right do you do this, he asked. And I told him, by what right? And he repeated the same question I answered in the same way.

He didn't know what to say. He was beside himself with anger. And he stood up and he said, you idiot! Are you willing to suffer that? There is nothing that provokes men as the gospel.

They say it's not true, it's a myth, it's fiction, but why do they get so outraged? They say it's not true, it's a myth, but why do they get so outraged? People are not indifferent to the message that has been preached by the Holy Spirit. It's by the preaching, the foolishness of preaching, that God saves them and will believe. And I'll tell you, it is foolish.

I never felt more foolish. To talk to the air and nobody is listening. It's foolish.

And then came the last night. And we went that day knocking on every door where the students lived in the dormitories. We invited them to a radical gospel meeting that night.

I don't know what God was going to do, but it was going to be radical. And we were so weary by the end of the afternoon, walking through all the floors and knocking on all the doors. No time even to prepare for that night's final meeting.

Completely exhausted, my mind was numb. We simply had to totally trust God. About 50 people came that night.

And I had no message. So I just opened in prayer. I said, we promised you a radical gospel meeting.

We also don't know what to do. But we're going to trust the Holy Ghost. And then I sat down.

And one by one, different members of our community came up to the microphone. Housewives, young brothers, married men. One had a testimony, one had a word, one had an explanation.

John MacDonald, who usually just plays the guitar and sings. He read the whole 5th chapter of the Book of Romans in the Philips translation. Then he made some comments, and they were good.

You know what I realized was happening? These people were getting the full gospel. It was being expressed by an entire body that was doing the work of an evangelist. And it was real and impressive.

All I could do then was stand up and conclude in prayer. And I said, anybody who wants to speak further with any of us or seek us in prayer, we're available. I didn't even have the faith to give an invitation.

Because there was no powerful or impressive preaching. So the meeting was over. Three days were over.

We were obedient to come each day. And now what could we show for it? Not a single soul saved. Where's the power of the gospel? The scripture says that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.

So the meeting broke up, and I was about to walk away when a man came toward me who was sitting a few rows back. He didn't look like he was very impressed with the whole meeting. What complaint am I going to hear from this man now? Am I going to be called idiot again? The first words that came out of his mouth were, Bradley said, I want to pray.

I need to be saved. I was astounded. And before I could say anything, he began to pray.

And I was going to correct him and say, hey, that's not the way to pray for salvation. But before I could say that, he was being saved. The light of God was coming into his face.

It was going from death to life right in front of my eyes. Then another guy got out of his seat, and he said, I need to rededicate my life. I don't know where this came from, but I said to him, you don't need to dedicate your life.

You've never dedicated your life. You need to be saved. He said, that's true.

And he prayed right on the spot, and he was saved. Then another one got up. About three or four people were saved in a few minutes.

And they began to talk about being baptized. Goyen told the world to preach this gospel to every creature. As many as believe in our baptism shall be saved.

I said, well, next Sunday, if you want to come to our place, we live on a lake. We could do it. Well, Sunday, this person couldn't come because he had this commitment, one problem or another.

Well, I said, the following week, I have to be away. Somebody foolishly said, why don't we do it tonight? This university is right by a lake. I said, but I've got my best preaching pants on.

I couldn't think to go in the water with these pants. But they all wanted to be baptized now. So what could I do? And just as we were leaving the building, I thought, well, you women wait behind and pray, and just we men will go.

So then I could take my pants off and go in my underwear. That's what we did. Imagine if some policeman caught us that night.

Some photographer from the school newspaper. Was there? No, if. We quickly got dressed, and we went into the lobby of the school, and we went to a coffee machine.

We were all cold and wet. And a student was doing his homework by the machine. He looked up and he saw all these happy, wet people.

He said, what have you guys been doing? And some of the brothers began to speak to him. And to lead him to the Lord. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

It's the foolishness of preaching that saves men. You need to hear the word of God. The word that confronts them.

The word that demands a response. God's own word out of our mouths. It's the mercy of God to send it.

He sent it to me. And I was confronted. I could no longer be indifferent to God.

He stopped me in the middle of my atheistic career. I met a young girl who was on vacation in Switzerland. And she spent the day with me, walking in the woods near the city.

Why are you being kind to me, I asked. I was a communist, but I'd never seen kindness. She said, it's the love of God.

How is it you're not afraid of me? Oh, she said, it's the love of God. And she went on like that all afternoon. I was getting more and more angry with this kind of God talk.

If she mentions God once more, I thought I will devastate her. I like to engage Christians in debate and wipe them out. So she mentioned God one more time.

That was it. I said, you've been talking about God all afternoon. I'm sick of it.

Answer me one question that no Christian has ever successfully been able to answer. I said, how do you know that God is? I thought, here's a long silence now. She'll be very quiet.

She'll think. I thought she's going to say some clever things she learned in Sunday school. I'm intellectual.

I'll wipe her out. To my amazement, she didn't even hesitate for a moment. She looked at me with complete innocence.

She had a face full of light. I know that God lives. He lives in me.

And then my heart went, POW! Everything inside of me exploded. I was stunned to the foundation of my life. I was like a man who was bludgeoned and who had fallen to the ground.

What hit me? What she said was not theological or intellectual. But it was simply true. And she had the face to prove it.

God did live in her. I saw that she was in the light. I was in the darkness.

The word in her mouth was truth. You say, but that word is a cliché. That's not a scripture even.

It was the word that God gave. It was the word of spirit and life. It was the word of spirit and life.

The beginning is the word. May we bear the word to our generation. Not in some mechanical formula.

But as the spirit gives it. A word of truth that is formed in us. A word made flesh.

It cuts through everything. It touches a man in his deepest part. It requires a response.

Let's pray for such a word for Japan. To cut through false religion. To cut through idolatry.

To cut through deception. The word of God. That saves.

So precious God, we pray tonight. That we might be the bearers of the word. That the word might be formed in us.

That we might be as one scent. That we might speak with the absoluteness of God. With the authority of a Paul.

Not just because we believe the word. But because we live as if we believe it. Send the word, we pray.

To this nation. Into Asia. Into all the world.

In Jesus' name we pray.

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