

K-467 God's Purpose for Israel and the Church

by Art Katz

Art Katz's sermon explores the profound connection between Israel and the church, emphasizing the need for a prophetic understanding of Israel's role in God's plan.

Duration: 1:14:13

Scripture: Genesis 12:3, Isaiah 53:5, Matthew 6:33, Acts 1:8, Romans 11:33-36, Revelation 7:9-10

Topics: "Israel"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the power and importance of the Word of God. He states that when the Word of God is spoken in obedience to God's commandment, it has the ability to raise the dead. The speaker also discusses the relationship between the church and Israel, highlighting the significance of Israel in making God known to all nations. He warns against deception and self-celebration within the church, urging believers to align their perspectives with how God sees things. The sermon concludes with a reading from Ezekiel 37, where the prophet is shown a vision of a valley filled with dry bones, symbolizing the spiritual condition of the people. God instructs the prophet to prophesy over the bones, and they come to life, representing the power of God to bring life and restoration.

Transcript

I need to pray again for the presentation of a word the Lord is giving me in these days. I seem to be speaking it almost exclusively everywhere, which is rare for me. So I can only assume that I'm warped and I've been fixated on something, or God himself feels that this word is so important and on time that his people in different nations where we've been and here need to hear it.

It has to do with Israel, and I think that we can safely be assured that from here on till the conclusion of the age, Israel will be the focal point of God's attention and ought therefore to be ours, but not in the way that we have up till now expressed that. I think the two basic responses of God's people is sentimental on the one hand, undue celebration, and rejection or disinterest or resentment on the other. There's a way in which I think that we can perceive Israel from an apostolic and prophetic perspective that is the richest and most significant and most demanding of all.

There's a reason why we substitute sentiment for an apostolic and prophetic view. It's less requiring. All you have to do is make nice and pinch the cheek of a Jew or plant a tree or attend a conference, but the apostolic and prophetic perception of the subject, as I think you'll see, is far more demanding.

Actually, it's for our sake. We are the enemies of the gospel for our sake. Very few recognize how much Israel in its apostate condition, in its unbelieving condition, is serving and will serve the purposes of God toward the church more than you can suspect.

Take my word for it. You can probe the scriptures at your leisure that we are locked in in a reciprocal relationship with this people, the church, and Israel in the wisdom and genius of God that the one without the other cannot establish or be established in its eternal destiny. We need the other desperately, and one serves purposes for the other in the remarkable and reciprocal way that God intends that the church has yet itself to recognize and has been losing, therefore, the greater value of it.

So my prayer tonight is that whatever has been lost to us will be greatly made up, and we'll see the subject, the people, the nation, its restoration in the way that God intends. When Paul saw it, and it takes a revelation, he was so ecstatic that he ran the limits of language. Romans 11, 33 through 36.

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God, who has been his counselor, stretches the very limits of language. What Paul saw struck such an ecstatic note in his apostolic soul that he could barely find the words to express it. Until we have come to a like exaltation of God for the reasons for which he came, we have not yet understood the mystery.

And he said to her, we should not be ignorant of the mystery lest we become wise in our own conceit. And I want to suggest that certain expressions of our present-day charismatic and evangelical Christianity are exactly that fulfillment. Kingdom now, dominion, replacement theology, where the church sees itself as Israel's successor or sees itself as the agent by which the kingdom comes or is itself the kingdom, are all expressions of the conceit about which Paul warned.

There's nothing more distorted than a conceited church. Because in one fell swoop, it invalidates itself as church. It loses the character of its Lord, who is meek and lowly of heart.

It's not just a conceit about Israel. It's the conceit that issues from the ignorance of Israel that affects every aspect of the church's life and character and either renders it apostolic or unfitted for the things for which we are called as the church, namely, His eternal glory. So, I'm going to take a little sip of water.

Precious God, who is sufficient for these things? If our brother Paul had to pray for the grace of utterance to make these mysteries known, what shall we say? And if these are mysteries that are given not only to save us from conceit, but to fit us for a destiny, if it's more than just that we should be coffee clutch experts on prophecy that you intended, but that we are called to fulfill the mystery and not just merely acknowledge it, if the mere speaking of it requires a grace, what shall the fulfillment require? And so we ask that you would generously stretch us. And if you can birth a nation in a day, what can you do for a church in a night? And we ask that largely, for we need largely. We have large needs.

We are not persuaded these are the last days. We have not the urgency, my God, that should mark us as an apostolic entity. We believe what we don't believe.

We believe what we make plans for the future. And we secretly in our humanistic hearts desire the amelioration of all things rather than the end of all things of which your scripture speaks in an apocalyptic coming of God in judgment followed by a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth Christ his name. Give us a good shaking, Lord, and restore the categories of the faith that need restoring, both to those who are assembled here and those who will hear by the tape beyond this night.

We thank you and praise you for your precious jealousy over us, my God, and the word that you've given. Make it alive, Lord, by your spirit and let it perform a work. We thank you and give you the praise.

In Jesus' name, God's people said amen. Well, will you turn with me to Ezekiel 37? Familiar chapter, the Valley of Dry Bones. I don't know what your experience is, but my own is this, that up till now I've had, what shall I say, not a disrespect, a kind of impatience or a disregard for conferences on prophecy, for time charts, for all of the kinds of things that evangelicals and dispensational believers love to attend and to consider.

It seemed to me rather escapist to occupy oneself with futuristic things to the neglect of the things that are immediate and at hand. And so, if I'm dealing with a prophetic text tonight, it's because the grace of God in the light of events that are now taking place is quickening it and saying that the events themselves now begin to underline and give weight and meaning to what has been up till now relatively abstract and distant. And that this is not an invitation for a flight from the present, but in the paradox of God, one that brings us to a tremendous relevance for the presence and the anticipation of the things that shall shortly come to pass.

Namely, the soon coming death and resurrection of Israel of which this chapter speaks and which events are beginning to fulfill. Not the least of them is the Intifada, the Palestinian uprising in Israel that began approximately around the 40th celebration, the 40th anniversary of Israel's history, where many of us were ready to rejoice for the establishment of that state at last. But when these events took place, something ominous was struck in my heart and I began to have a sense of foreboding that has not left me and a sense that this difficulty is insoluble and intractable and will not lend itself to a diplomatic solution, but it's the beginning of a process of increasing calamity for Israel that might well mean the end of that political entity as we now know it.

And indeed I'm prepared to say tonight an end that must come if the more glorious and prophetic, biblical fulfillment is to come for which the first is a preliminary to the latter. The first being earthly and the latter being heavenly. But the first must go before the second and it will be a painful demise and if we are not prepared to understand and to expect it, they bring to us such a shock to our naive and evangelical faith and expectations who so much wanted to see Israel succeed that we might well be the casualties of a collapsed hope, not only about Israel, but about God and about the word of God.

So let's read this chapter soberly. The hand of the Lord was upon me and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord and set me down in 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 unto me, Prophesy 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 sinews upon you and I will bring 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 his bone and when I beheld, lo the sinews and the flesh came upon them and the skin covered them above but there was no breath in them.

Then he said unto me, Prophesy 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 upon their feet and exceeding great honour.

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. 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 shall you know that I the Lord have spoken it and performed it, saith the Lord. Amen.

Well, there are a couple of pungent expressions in that text that we find not only here but frequently in the prophetic writings. Then you shall know that I am the Lord. I can't say enough to impress you about how critical a requirement that is for Israel in God's sight.

Then you shall know that I am the Lord. I think that even the most casual observer of Israel's 40 years of history must acknowledge that that knowledge has not yet come. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.

And maybe even to bring the point home more particularly, then you shall know that I am is the Lord. Before Abraham was, Jesus said, I am. And to know that I am is the Lord is really to know.

It's a knowledge that far exceeds knowledge about God. It's the knowledge of God as he in fact is and must be known, especially by this people who have a particular calling and mandate, which Paul says in Romans 11, is without repentance. The gifts and callings of God are without repentance.

Then what is this nation's calling? To be a nation of priests and a light unto the world as a nation. Needless to say, the condition of the world today reveals that we have failed that calling. That's not to say that that will always be the case because God is preparing this nation for the fulfillment of its destiny and therefore it needs to know him if it is to proclaim him.

This knowledge is not cheap. In fact, unless we know that God who can raise from the dead, do we in fact know God as they need to see the demonstrable power of God for themselves in such a way that it leaves no question as to whether their return or their restoration is the result of their own activity and ability which has been very impressive or the clear demonstration of the supernatural ability of God to raise a nation from the dead, to bring it up out of its graves where it is scattered among the nations, to return it to its land, to rebuild the waste, the desolate places and the ruined cities, the land of your destruction it says somewhere in the book of Isaiah, in such a way that not only will Israel know that this is God who has effected this but the nations that are left round about them, Ezekiel 36, 36, shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places and plant that which was desolate, I the Lord have spoken it and will do it. Notice that it's a God who does by speaking you shall know that I am the Lord who hath spoken and performed this.

That to know God as the God of resurrection by a word which he speaks is ultimate and supreme knowledge. In fact, it would not be too exaggerated to say it's a moot question of whether the church really knows it. There's knowing and knowing.

There's giving a sense to the doctrinal truth of resurrection, but there's nothing like being raised up by the power of God out of one's own death by a word that is spoken that brings a much deeper knowledge of that God. And so the knowledge must be proportionate to the calling. And because their calling is ultimate

unto the nations, so also is the magnitude of this healing.

I think the key in this text is verse 11. And then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Does not mean, in my opinion, every Jew, the whole house of Israel, those that are elect and called and destined to come to the knowledge of God and to serve him, and a certain requirement is made for this people where they themselves say, our bones are dried, our hope is lost.

We are cut off. That is an ultimate acknowledgement unto despair. Utter hopelessness to affect change in one's condition.

A total acknowledgement of terrible destitution and inability. And I don't know of any time in the history of Israel where this national acknowledgement has been made. In fact, I think I'm prepared to say tonight that even the Holocaust did not evoke this acknowledgement.

You need to know a little something about us Jews. We are ultimate optimists. We have a sublime confidence in humanity, in mankind, in our own humanity and our own ability as men.

Our 40 year history is a real testimony to that of what we can do to restore a wilderness, to make it bloom somewhat, revive or resuscitate a dead language, establish a nationhood and a military power in an impressive way, and many of the other attributes of statehood that take other nations centuries or millennia to establish, we have performed in 40 years. If you study the history of Nobel Prizes, we are far in advance of any other ethnic group in terms of the number of awards that we have won out of proportion to our number in the population. We are men writ large.

We are sublimely confident in our human ability. And we need to recognize that this has been the underlying character of the nation of Israel in a very impressive way that has impressed even the church. The only thing that's wrong with it is that it's not glorious.

What would have impressed nations and impressed the church does not impress God. Because God is after something far more significant than the ability of a people to establish their own nationhood. Paul concludes Romans 11 with reference to the word glory.

In the verses that begin, In a way that a single speaking will not allow. The issue of Israel's destiny and its calling as a nation is the issue of glory. Not its own, but God's.

Israel is a witness not of God's nation, not to itself, but to him. Now some of you are slumbering. And I can't get my voice pitched higher than what I'm speaking.

I am locked in in a strange way with God tonight. Almost in a monotone. I don't know what the idea is.

Because I usually enjoy a remarkable liberty with this subject and text. But I just trust the Lord for this. Maybe he wants to rest the whole issue with the primacy of his word.

And not with theatrics or charismatic enablement or personality that would endear that word to you. And in fact, my brother's preface to my speaking wholly centered in the issue of the word. And that, I think, is the issue both for you tonight and for Israel as a subsequent time through you, is the issue of the word of God as establishing the things that pertain to his eternal glory, for they shall not be established at all.

Only a God who performs by his word is God. But the remarkable thing is, it's not a word that he himself will directly speak. Rather, it's a word that you will be required to speak, for Israel shall continue to lie in its

grave, hopeless, cut off, and as dry bones.

The genius of this text, obvious in just a superficial examination, is that the intent of God in this text is not alone for the house of Israel, but another in the text called the Son of Man, who is commanded to prophesy and address and speak to these bones that they might live. I want to stake my whole minuscule reputation after 26 years of service, or believing in about over 20 years of ministry, to say that I believe with all my heart that that is a metaphorical suggestion as of necessity must be that points to the church of the last days as a Son of Man company in its ultimate prophetic and apostolic configuration that has come to such a place of maturity and stature in God that its speaking is as God speaking and its word constitutes the event for Israel that brings it from its grave. That the whole premium and weight of God for the fulfillment of his whole majestic plan centers upon a church of an ultimate kind, namely yourself.

And I always have to suck air at this point and ask under my breath for a quick injection of the faith of God himself to believe for it, looking out at the constituency. Because to speak a word of this kind as event that raises the dead means it's one word spoken at one time in commandment as prophecy in total agreement with full authority or it's only merely a bit and an opinion that falls to the floor and avails nothing. A church that will speak this word must be a church indeed, not the mere conglomerate of individualities that we now essentially represent.

Little islands of individualism that do its own thing, living privatistically and coming together midweek and Sunday to share a common facility for the benefit of a service. That is not the church and cannot fulfill this destiny. Those that believed were together and with power gave the apostles testimony to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I don't want to get into that too much, but just to say this, there's no apostolic power without God's people being together. Those that believed were together is more than the statement of the proximity of their seating arrangement. It's the statement of the integral quality of their life together that far exceeds anything that we presently know charismatically, and with which we are presently satisfied because it brings to the church an aura of increased life and enjoyment and pleasantness of fellowship, but still falls short of the glory of God.

The issue of Israel is the issue of the church. And here's the catch, folks. Only Israel and the ultimate requirement that it constitutes for us is the incentive given by God that calls us to this kind of apostolic authenticity.

We cannot succeed in being to Israel what we must. If that nation's return, Paul says, is life from the dead, and that deserves an entire message on itself, on its own. You have to understand that we're not talking about Israel coming alive to be again what it presently is.

Resurrection is a newness of life, another character and quality of life where Gentiles will clutch the skirt of one Jew, where we will be a diadem in the hand of God. Nations will be astonished at the transformation or the transfiguration of this people, who will experience the deepest brokenness and contrition that the world has ever seen, for the Lord says that we will loathe ourselves in our own sight after He has returned us by the mercy that He will extend in the last days. Then shall you remember, it says in Ezekiel 36, your evil ways, verse 31, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.

We shall see Him whom we have pierced and mourn as one mourns for one's only son. I don't have words. I wouldn't even attempt it.

I just ask you to understand that Israel's return from the dead is not merely the making alive again of something as it once was, but altogether a transcendentally different people and nation whose presence among the nations will be welcomed with as much joy as Paul was received by pagan Thessalonians. And at the end of his apostolic career, when the elders met with him from Miletus, or at Miletus, and hung upon his neck and wept that they would see his face no more, and he could say to them, you know what manner of man I was with you from the beginning, and call them his children, and travail that Christ be formed in them, and did not withhold themselves day and night to give them the whole counsel of God, and that when they heard the word of God from him, they received it not as the word of man, but for what it was, the word of God that performed a work in them that believed, sufficient to turn them from their idols to serve the living God, and to wait for his Son who comes from heaven, and who will deliver them from the wrath to come. Paul said that I'm a man out of season.

What did he mean by that? What he meant was that in me you have a forespice, a prefiguring of what the entire nation will be to the Gentile nations when it shall come into its own apostolate. What you see in me is a prefiguring of the blessing that will come to Gentile nations, because I myself was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and yet my character was so heavenly that those who would ordinarily have resented or recoiled at a Jew bringing them the knowledge of God instead received him. You know what manner of entry I had with you, that you return from your idols to serve the living God, is a picture of what restored Israel will be to the nations of the world.

If Paul is anything, he's a master of understatement when he said if the falling away of them has been the blessing of the Gentiles, what shall their return be but life from the dead, and so much more. I believe, for example, that the Lord is pent up in heaven, Acts 321, waiting for the restitution or the restoration of all things spoken by the prophets since the world began. I don't know how many times I have misquoted and misemployed that to make it to speak about the restoration of the church of which the prophets knew nothing.

The prophets had one subject, the whole of Isaiah, virtually from beginning to conclusion. Every minor prophet, as well as Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and the rest had one passionate theme, the restoration of Israel from historic apostasy and idolatry at the end of the age to inaugurate a millennial age and the restoration or the establishment of a theocratic kingdom upon the throne of David, upon the hill of Zion, in the restored nation and land of Israel in the city of Jerusalem where the returning lord as king would establish his own sanctuary. Believest thou this? I call this the scandal of specificity, the scandal of particularity because we Christians like a certain degree of ambiguity.

We don't like a God who is that specific and will set his king on his holy hill, Zion. Surely that's got to be a metaphor but it says in Psalm 2, he holds the nations in derision who rail against him and against his anointed and want to throw off their fetters for they heave in rage and imagine a vain thing for they will not have him to rule over them, let alone that that rule shall come through a despised nation Israel whose kingdom is covenantally promised on the throne of David to order it and to establish it henceforth and forever. Isaiah 9.6 You have to pray for me.

In my old age I'm becoming a literalist. I'm believing the word of God as it seems evidently to stand to refer to a specific people, land and time and city and kingdom which is theocratic and which Jesus had a

supreme opportunity once and for all to altogether remove when before his ascension the question was asked by his disciples is it time now to restore the kingdom to Israel? He could have said oh you blankety blanks in your narrow chauvinistic and nationalistic concerns don't you understand that the issues are much larger than your political desire to be vindicated after having been squelched and been denigrated by Rome and other conquerors? Kingdom of God is a much larger thing than your national interest. But he did not say that.

He said it's not time for you it's not time now to know. He did not say it would not come. But what they need to know and we need to know that though it's a kingdom promised to Israel and will be established in its boundaries and in its land and in its holy city which the Lord will make his sanctuary it's not the kingdom exclusively for Israel but to all nations.

For the word of the Lord it says in Isaiah 2 shall the law of the Lord shall go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem. It's the locus and capital but the reign goes out to the nations who will beat their swords into plowshares and study war no more. Now do you have that theocratic anticipation? Can you understand why I'm a little jealous for those who are talking about the kingdom now? And all we need to do is take over the organs of society and bring it into education and culture and the arts etc.

etc. For a church that can't even properly blow its own nose. The kingdom in my opinion and I think that the Scripture support it comes with the king.

But when does the king come? When you shall say blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. This very chapter that we're reading Ezekiel 37 concludes after they return to the Lord to the land in verse 24 and David my servant shall be king over them and they all shall have one shepherd and walk in my judgments and observe my statutes to do and they shall dwell in the land I have given unto Jacob my servant wherein your fathers have dwelt and they shall dwell therein even they and their children and their children's children forever and my servant David shall be their prince forever. Evidently that's not the David who is presently buried on Mount Zion.

It's one who is figuratively and symbolically called David even Jesus will be their prince forever. That's what the angel told Mary about the child that shall be conceived in her in Luke 1 31 he shall rule over the house of Jacob he shall be great in verse 32 he shall be called the son of the highest and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Maybe that's why I'm not getting fancy tonight.

These are simple biblical prophetic truths that need to be restored to the church which we have somehow spiritualized away made to stand as metaphor for the church and entirely miss the genius of God in his remarkable program to restore a people who have been dead to his purposes in their apostasy and bring them to a place where they themselves will acknowledge we are cut off we are without hope, we are as dry bones and the moment that that acknowledgement comes and we're moving toward the circumstances that will evoke it and you need to see that because the calamities of Israel and its increasing failure will assuredly come. Already there's a disappointment about Israel and many who had hoped that she would have been a nation of another kind. What was the hope of Israel? It is not God I'm afraid to say.

The hope of Israel was in itself namely that having been so long without nationhood that now in modern times that we again have had opportunity, we would demonstrate to the world what the distinctive of a Jewish nation is among Gentile nations namely our distinct ethical and moral genius. We would show that we are just and righteous in a way that nations have not demonstrated in the necessity to preserve their

existence and to display their power. If you understand that you'll have a deeper insight into the dilemma that has come through the Palestinian uprising than anything else and more than that it will save you from a disappointment and a condemnation and a censure of Israel for failures that she must I believe necessarily experience from the hand of God.

She has got to become not only a disappointment to you, she has got to become a disappointment to herself. In fact, such a disappointment that she herself will say, we are cut off, we are without hope, we are a struggle. Whatever it will take and it may take very much in these immediate coming months and years God will allow or perform it.

The only thing that helps us to understand the magnitude of his dealings with such a nation is the magnitude of his calling. If you only want a success, if you only want to affirm Israel in her present condition and to see her to avoid unnecessary suffering and to be established already after all of the terrors and problems and pain she has experienced, such a view is commendable, but it falls short of the glory of God. You know what our problem is, saints? We have not sufficiently considered with an appropriate jealousy that glory.

We have not taken millennial and eternal things into consideration. We are so fixed in time and see only the things that are relatively immediate that we want that thing now. And we are impatient and unwilling for the cost and the requirement that fulfills eternal callings that eventuate in God's glory.

And if you'll not see that for Israel, the necessity for further suffering, further defeat, a being brought down who are coming to an end of itself that its life might be entirely that of God, and therefore to His glory, what will you expect for yourself? And what will you allow in God's dealings with you? Do you think that you're ready tonight to come together and clear your throat if God were to command you to speak one word that would constitute Israel's restoration? Are we of one mind, of one heart, and of one soul? Are we in agreement? Can we speak a word with authority that constitutes an event, or would it be just a matter of opinion? No accident that this chapter begins not so much with Israel as with the Son of Man, who is equally the object of God's attention and dealing. And the initial thing is to be brought out and down by the Holy Spirit into the valley of dry bones. The prophet himself, as the Son of Man, must be dealt with, must have his face rubbed into the grim reality of the death of Israel, must see things as God sees them, for that alone is truth.

For what is a prophet who is not truthful and does not speak from the place of truth? And truth is painful before its glorious. And always requires a coming out and a being brought down into a valley, which is the statement of things depressing. Did you follow that? Let's look at that.

37. The hand of the Lord was upon me and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord. Out of what, you wonder? Out of something less and other than truth as God himself sees it.

Is it an exaggeration to say that the church, like the world, is shot through tonight with levels of deception of one kind or another? Of imaginings, of vain thoughts, of self-celebrations? No wonder that we were so quick to celebrate Israel, which is more the projection of our own condition than we know. For we ourselves wanted to be affirmed in our own success, and we're quite content with it as it is. You know what makes the prophet's task so difficult? Is that he's required to convey things as God sees them.

When everything that is human, religious, quote, even spiritual, contends against that scene. It requires a being carried out in the spirit of the Lord and being set down in the midst of the valley which was full of dry

bones. And cause me to pass by them round about, and behold, there were very many an 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. For prophet is anything is a man of faith. But to bring a prophet to an ultimate place that stretches even the parameters of his own faith, where he himself cannot even believe for the restoration of a people who are in that ultimate condition of death is a very suggestive statement of the place to which we ourselves will be brought by the same Spirit, as many as are willing, to the same acknowledgments that our faith is inadequate to believe.

And if we cannot believe, how can we speak? And if we cannot speak, how shall we be raised? You know what I want to say tonight, Saints? Our faith is so minimal. Our faith is so sub-par. Our faith is not an apostolic faith, and I'm not talking about a faith about apostolic truths or about prophetic understandings.

I'm talking about the constituency of it, the character, the myth, the heft, the weight, the quality of our faith. You know why? So little is required from our faith. Our Christian life is so predictable, such a matter of succession of services only.

Nothing ultimate or heroic requires us for our believing. Our lives are so essentially ordered and comfortable that it only has become a faith about doctrine, but to believe for another by the power of God, now totally dead to itself. And that that must come by a word that is spoken, and spoken out of our own mouth is ultimate requirement of faith.

You want to know something? The church that will meet that test because it takes this mandate seriously will find itself remarkably equipped to ascend into its heavenly places in the fulfillment of its destiny to rule and to reign with Christ from heavenly places in the character of the Lamb. I'm asking you to believe statements I'm making tonight that the church will never come into the place of God's ultimate intention, cannot, except by the fulfillment of the mandate required of it exclusively to be the agent by which Israel is itself restored at the end of the age. For that requirement is an ultimate requirement.

And the fact of the matter is that it can only be performed by those whose faith is the faith of the Son of God. Paul said, how do you say, I'm crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I. But Christ lives in me, and the life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God who died for me, and so on. This is more than our faith.

It'll have to be more than our love. How many of us can have a faint affection for Israel and like it or have been intrigued by the mystique of Israel or have a kind of sympathy toward her? I want to tell you however nice that is, it's inadequate and furthermore you'll not be able to maintain it. Israel is on a course by which it shall be hated of all nations.

It does not give a rap for world opinion. It cannot afford to consider it, and its actions and its conduct will become such that it will become a cup of reeling and a stone or rock of offense for all nations. So finally the only solution for the nations, for this exacerbating presence in the Middle East that threatens the security of all the world, is to come against it so as to destroy it.

That's the prophetic statement for Israel of which the scriptures speak. Israel shall be increasingly hated. The reasons that we have been endeared to it will no longer be there and so the question is any affection or endearment for Israel has got to be more than the issue of human sentiment but really the love of God.

The issue of Israel is the issue of the church. For our ability to speak a word that works by love, a faith that works by love will be the statement of to what degree we are in union with that God whose love is unconditional and cannot be offended again. I'm glad this is on tape.

I need to hear these simple exclamations again and again. You do know that there is an accelerating anti-Semitism in the world today and even in this country. The velocity and the depth of this poison is spreading as a bilge over the world.

I'm astonished in my 62 years of life to see the rapidity with which this is spreading and how vile is its poison. You wonder who can be exempt. I can make a few statements tonight that are now being circulated and printed that would even tempt you to move into a place where you would consider Israel in another way so as to incur a kind of resentment and bitterness toward her and finally join the course that shall swell all nations.

As for example, that the recent war against Iraq was masterminded by Jewish influences in the world and in this nation that suckered this country into fighting its battle to remove the threat to its security. That the issue was not oil at all but Israel's security and because of their influence among the nations and the Zionist lobby etc. etc.

Doesn't that sound feasible? Plausible? Believable? And that's only a faint and even polite statement of the kinds of things that are presently being spoken and will get worse. You want to know what God's barometer is for the spirituality of the church? In my observation after a quarter of a century as a believer, it's not the euphoric feeling that you experience in worship. It's what is your naked response? Cold, grey, dawn, naked response to the Jew who are not in themselves naturally commendable and give you every reason as Gentiles to be provoked, resentful, irritated, jealous, envious or annoyed.

We're too successful. We're too accomplished. We get straight A's.

There's a whole history of enmity between Gentiles and Jews that only takes the slightest encouragement to be whipped again to a cross. God has placed a peculiar people in the earth made in his own image who serve purposes of God and especially to the church even and especially in their unbelief. The Jew is the index of what is the truth and the depth of our relationship with God where they are being brought to a place that no one can esteem them, hold them in regard or extend mercy unto them when such an act will be sacrificial if not perilous for one's own security in life except it's by the love of one who is greater than ourselves that can only be obtained in a genuine union with him.

Israel's priority is real but it is not located in her achievements but lies exclusively in God's faithfulness to his own election and promise. Therefore if the issue is with God and not the success of a nation out of her own prowess and ability the fulfillment waits upon a final and utter exhaustion of any human capability. Israel's failure therefore to establish herself as a righteous state as an example to the Gentile nations is her witness to this very fact for Israel is his witness people all the more in their apostasy and undeservedness that he might be sanctified through them in the sight of all nations for he will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy and mercy is all the more mercy when it is apparently and clearly undeserved.

And in fact when that mercy comes you know what will be the hoot and howl of a shallow charismatic church who even now bristles that God would be so narrow and so particular to choose a certain piece of geography a city and a people they'll say but they don't deserve it which is true but what it reveals is that

though we have given a nominal ascent to the doctrines of grace we have all along lived effectually on the basis of human merit and works. The issue of the Jew and God's unparalleled mercy toward them for Paul says in Romans 11 that through your mercy they might obtain mercy and the scenario is being fulfilled by which you're going to have the real opportunity to give it at a time when doing so may threaten your life. Yes right here in the United States so global will the hatred against them be because the mercy that doesn't cost anything is hardly a mercy and when they find a people who are willing to extend it at the risk of their Gentile lives maybe at last they will be moved to envy as Paul said they should for what if they're falling, what does Paul say? Have they shown that they should fall God forbid but through their fall salvation has come to the Gentiles so as to move them to jealousy.

The greater possibility for the fulfillment of Romans 11 is with the final generation at the end of the age when Israel becomes the focal point of God's attention and the powers of darkness, the principalities and the powers of the air that know better than you that the establishment of his theocratic rule is related to their restoration determined out of their own wisdom to remove that threat to their vested interest and influence over the nations which up until now has not been threatened by exterminating that people whose return is the key to his coming and his kingdom and that is the underlying key factor in the hatred that will be increasingly poured out through the unregenerate and unthinking vessels available to the spirits of darkness to ventilate their fury against that people whom they hate because they are appointed to be the locus of a kingdom that means the end of their false and usurping rule. There are great issues here, saints. We're not playing around.

This is not the little kiddie game and that God has called us to a cutesy people for whom we have a strange affection. There's a mystery and it takes a revelation by the spirit to receive it and the understanding of it brings requirement from which many will shrink. So how much will the disappointment of an unbelieving church be predicated upon false premises of the hope of an idealized Israel contrary to the whole tenor of the gospel and such ones will join the chorus of voices against it condemning Israel for the very failure that God intends to experience.

Well, I want to try out something I've never spoken before that has been stirring my thought today and then we'll end. Interesting that this prophetic one who prophesies at the commandment of God and notice it has not to do with whether you're in the mood or if God will or you think or feel it's when he calls for it. Are you habituated for that now? What will it take for us to be commanded? And can we do it in a final moment when it's required if we have all along not been prepared for such obedience? Son of man is a very suggestive phrase.

This prophetic man is also a son of man. He sweats, he's unbelieving, he has doubts, he doesn't even know if he desires to see the restoration of Israel, let alone that he can believe God for the power of that restoration. Because after all, up till now, if he represents the church, he's been God's exclusive son.

The object of God's attention and now for another one to return that would compete for that is not something that every believer is, what's the word, generous enough to desire. Remember the older son in the return of the prodigal? He was not happy to see his brother come back. And the father had to assure him that I have always been with you and all that I've had has always been yours.

But he did not know it deeply enough. And therefore smarted and was resentful at the favor that was now being given to another. I'll tell you, dear saints, this is deeper in our gut than we know.

And not only because you don't have to be Gentile to experience that. You can be a Jewish believer and resent the restoration of your own people because you've sent it into a jealousy that is singular for the church alone and you don't want him to share it with another. God had a fight with me to break out of that narrowness and make an allowance for the restoration of his ancient people and to understand there's enough glory for both and enough purpose for both and that neither one of us will enter into that purpose independent of the other.

So the son of man is brought down into the valley to render a priestly service because he cannot be up out of that valley and talk to Israel and speak a word to it from a lofty and elevated place. He cannot be superior to a people who have been brought down. A priest requires that his feet be in the dirt, that his holy garments be pressed right to his skin, that there's a contact, an identification of that for which he is called to serve.

And therefore that people who will speak a priestly and prophetic word, or it will not avail, must come down and be in the midst of that people and identify with them in their fallenness and in their apostasy and in their failure. If we are above them and elevated and superior, our word will only be an exhortation and will be limp and not be a word that brings life. We cannot speak it from a lofty or morally superior place.

The prophet addresses Israel in its final and ultimate extremity, but from the midst of its depressing condition. His identification to be priestly cannot be mental or verbal or merely sympathetic but actual for being brought down into the midst of this people. His identification is a participation in their condition.

There's something about us that is so innately superior that looks upon the failure of Israel as scandal that invalidates us as being a people through whose mouth a word could come for their restoration. Something of the truth of this has had to be wrought in my own life with a wife who has been a failure in my sight and for whom I would have every reason to judge and to condemn for not getting with it and to realize after many years of excruciating difficulty that she is in that condition for my sake that God wanted to finger and raise to the surface and reveal the depths of my own pharisaical and morally superior heart and that nothing would have flushed it out that a woman who was required to act and be in such a way as to elicit from me and to evoke from me either a condemnation or an identification with her in the valley that would be pressing for her to occupy that she might be raised out of it by a word that would be spoken not by a spiritual snob who is superior to her but one who sees that his own superiority is worse than anything for which he had condemned her. How far will God go to have a church and a nation who shall be to his eternal glory forever? Unto him be glory forever, Paul says.

It's an eternal glory but the issues of it are enacted in time by us. We are locked in, dear saints, with this people in such a requirement. This is more than a slap on the back and a chuck under the chin.

This is more than Israel bonds and planting a tree. This is yielding ourselves to God for such dealings and of such debts that for us it's nothing less than the issue of a death and a resurrection. For only a resurrection faith and a resurrection power and the unity of God's people that comes as the church of the resurrection, that has seen it in its own life and its own working, can speak a word of that power to a people who would otherwise remain in their grave.

That's why you're not going to get out tonight without an invitation to submit to the debts required of us that keep us from being this one people who can speak this word at his command in a faith that works by love. For the issue of Israel is the issue of the church and the issue of the church is the issue of God and I praise God for the issue. For if it were not there and it were not given, we would have been condemned to

something much less than the glory of God.

Israel is the ultimate challenge to the church, all the more in its apostasy unbelief and the death to which he's now coming. So it's a holy ground to which we're being called and we need as it were to take off our shoes and touch it and identify ourselves with it and allow ourselves to be formed by it because our identification is a participation or it's not an identification at all. Can you see why the church wants to get off the hook? Can you see why it's satisfied with something less? With feasts of tabernacle celebrations and planting a tree and a bond and a little thing like that? Cutesy stuff that requires nothing.

This priestly and prophetic fulfillment requires nothing less than our identification which is a participation in their shame and in their scandal and even the experience of their own death. And only from that place can we be unto them as life. Words that say, speak unto them.

Verse 4, he said unto me, prophesy upon these bones and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. It's a word unto them and can only come from this place of identification if it's to be for them. And after the bones are formed and the flesh is put on and the skin one last requirement, prophesy to the wind, O son of man, that the spirit of God might come into them that they might live and become an exceeding great army.

Not great so much numerically because this is a remnant of which we're speaking but great in its character and in its life. Speak to the wind is to say command God that his breath come. You've spoken to the bones and commanded them now speak unto me and command me.

And I don't know where that scripture is to be found but it's been lurking in my spirit for years. According to the work of my hands command ye me, saith the Lord. Have you got the chutzpah for that? To address God and command that his spirit come into them? People that cannot speak to the bones from the place of the bones will not be able to speak to God either.

This is so symbolic so charged with the ultimate things for which we're called. The valley of dry bones is the place of truth not only about Israel but about ourselves. Israel's condition which is intractable and hard will not yield to flush out what is intractable about us namely the dependence on works and human merit that is deeper than we realize though we give nominal assent to the doctrine of grace.

So if we can identify with Israel at her lowest in that condition we can speak to God in the highest for her life. It's abating and abounding. Those that will go down will ascend up and be able to command even God's very breath.

So I bless the Lord for this mystery. I don't know how successful I've been in communicating something of the sense of it. I want to pray that the word unaided simply spoken unimpressive will perform its own work to raise us up from the grave of our own apathy, indifference or even sentimentality for merely to be sentimental and kindly intention to Israel in terms of God's ultimate intention is as much to be as opposed.

There's a grave out of which we ourselves must come by the word that God speaks that will bring us to the place to be the agents of their resurrection. His way is not our way nor are his thoughts our thoughts. We're spoiled, indulgent and spiritually sensual.

We need color, we need flash, we need hype, we need all kinds of things and movings upon our emotions somehow to attest that God is there and something is being wrought. I think tonight God wants by his simple and unaided word to perform a work and as many who have ears to hear it and will receive it. So

let's bow before him who has given this night in the way that it has pleased him.

It may well be that on that day God shall require from us that corporate word ultimately spoken will be no more dramatic, no more impressive, no more emotional than what we have heard tonight. And yet because it is the word of God spoken out of the life of God in obedience to the commandments of God it will raise the dead. And Lord I ask tonight for a preview of the ultimate thing to which we're attending.

The mystery of the church and Israel. The revelation of yourself to that nation that will equip them, my God, to make you known as you are to all the nations, my God, that will be blessed by them in accordance with the promise that they will bless all the families of the earth. And we are the key as your prophetic son of man company.

Lord, if I have been speaking in commandment in obedience to your commandment tonight, let this word bring life. Bring this out of the grave, my God, of what has repressed, narrowed, kept back, stultified the fulfillment of these things and let there be a newness of life and coming forth to the mandate to which we are called. Bless this word.

Bless those who hear and receive it, my God, who are willing and welcome the debts, the work of the cross, every aspect of the self-life that makes us opinionated, self-willed, rebellious, individualistic, separate, that we might be the one people of God who could be commanded and whose word when it comes is event. May more be wrought tonight for Israel as the ultimate revealer of your glory than can be humanly considered. Thank you for this night as you have been pleased to give it.

Honor your word and perform it. We thank you and give you the praise in Jesus' holy name and God's people said, Amen.

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