

K-470 Signs of the Times

by Art Katz

The world is moving toward a global unification, and the Church must be prepared to face the consequences of this unification, including the rise of the anti-Christ system and the importance of apocalyptic expectation.

Duration: 1:03:37

Scripture: Acts 7:55, Revelation 12:17

Topics: "End Times"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the rapid and unexpected changes happening in the world, particularly in Eastern Europe. He emphasizes how our lives have become consumed with materialism and the constant need for more. The speaker also highlights the negative impact of this consumerist culture on the younger generation, who are becoming culturally illiterate and lacking critical thinking skills. He warns that this societal decline and the rise of anarchy will ultimately lead to a global imposition of a repressive system known as the beast system.

Transcript

And what I'm going to share tonight really deserves a three-day seminar. I'm just going to trust the Lord to edit it and bring the most salient points forth to your consideration. And just to tell you that it's been my single and exclusive message since the return from a three-month trip overseas, during the very time when the nations were being toppled in the East, East Europe, where I've been many times and have not thought such a thing could happen, and happen with the suddenness with which they took place, that we would be foolish to think that these massive changes that came in the space of days and weeks that not only toppled regimes of such monolithic proportion, but their very ideology, that somehow the whole of Marxism, Communism, Socialism has come into a kind of disrepute even with their own people.

It has lost its biting edge. And something has happened. God has flicked the switch.

And I was trying to sense in my spirit what these things mean. And what you'll hear tonight is a kind of prophetic commentary on the recent events and the shadow that they cast for the Church in the decade of the 90s. This is not a forecast.

I've never been that kind of prophetic figure that predicts. And I almost was forced by the Lord with a gentle nudge to even come up with the statement that you're going to hear tonight. So it's a kind of an assessment rather than a prediction of events taking place in the world and places where I have traveled,

knowing how abduate, unshakable those great Eastern European Marxist places were, and what they signify, I think, for the Church.

Things to ponder and to consider, take into your spirit. Because the decade of the 90s, I praise God I've been around for a few decades, but this decade is absolutely formative and final. I'll say this with complete authority.

But if the Lord should not come by the end of this decade, by the way, we should live as if we expect that. But whether he will come at the conclusion of this decade or not, the issues will have been adjoined and will have been established before this decade is out. The whole alignment that shall take place in the world, politically, socially, ecologically, economically, and religiously, will have been set in such a way as to be immovable.

It's a time of choice and of decision and of alignment. Because if you're going to hear from me tonight, that when the smoke clears, there's a centrifugal polarizing process taking place that will compel us into one radical camp or another, and there simply will not be a neutral ground to enjoy for those of us who do not have a stomach for radical alternatives. That the very nature of this age and its conclusion, the consummation toward which we're heading, compels us toward radical choices.

And the two radical choices for the Church will be apostasy or apostolicity. We'll either be apostate or apostolic. We'll be radically out of the faith or radically in the faith.

And just to say it in a word, we're going to be required at last to be saints. I mean for real saints. We really have it together, who are single-eyed and intent, who recognize the seriousness of the hour, and for some reason, as inoffensive as we are, we're going to be the object of a very calculated opposition and oppression and persecution unto martyrdom and death.

And that this should not take us by surprise, that these have always been the realities faced by that segment of the Church which is indeed pre-Church. And that the forces are now released or loosed, by which in the final consummating hours of human history, the Church is going to be the one, the true Church, the one impediment, the one obstruction to a kind of design of an ecumenical and global kind for which we will be the ungainly round peg in the square hole. So I think the first thing that I need to say is that however wonderful now that the doors are open and the walls are down for a kind of evangelism to places where it has been difficult or opposed, that there's yet a more significant factor that we need to consider.

That though we knew that we were moving toward a European pack of nations of a kind of economic confederation, what we need to see now is not a European pack, but a global pack. That the one single factor that has constituted the division in the world between East and West and democratic and socialist regimes is in effect nullified. That though the sounds of it, the vocabulary of that ideology may continue, it continues only in a ceremonial way.

That it is no longer the divisive factor that was once the impediment between a consolidation between East and West. It has been removed and it's symbolized by the unification of Germany itself. And having moved freely through the two Germanys over these last 10, 15, 20 years, it's a remarkable kind of consolidation.

And it's coming together just like that. We need to know that what is happening politically and economically are not just haphazard and circumstantial factors, but that God himself has removed the restraint that has kept the world in opposing camps and has himself laid the foundation by which there can be a global unification and a world economic system for which most of the worldlings, those who dwell on the earth, will celebrate. Because it comes under the words of unity and peace.

And who could not desire those two things in an age that has been punctuated by violence and disorder and confrontation and the threat even of atomic annihilation. So it's a very seductive and powerful thing that will come to us in the name of unity and peace. The only reason for which we will resist it is that we have been forewarned in the apocalyptic scriptures in the book of Revelation and Thessalonians and such places that this is called the beast system.

And it's an anti-Christ system. Humanly contrived, opposed to God and opposed to God's purposes and seeking a kind of uniformity at the price of freedom and the issues of the faith, which is the whole purpose for our being. It seeks to set in order something that will usurp or precede our God's own intention by which his creation and his globe is to be unified, namely the coming of himself and his kingdom.

So this is an anti-Christ, not only opposed, but one like us seeking himself by his own human and governmental way to establish a system which most of the world will pant after and all the more, not only because of its desirability, but because this figure that will rise, and I don't know whether it's a single figure, a composite figure or what, will be attended by lying signs and wonders that will be for the unwary and the unspiritually sophisticated a final concluding sign that how can you resist this and who can make war with the beast. Now we need to expect a parallel religious phenomenon. If the world is moving toward a political and economic unification, we should anticipate as well a religious global system of an ecumenical kind.

And Paul, who knows me through the years, and some of you, others who have followed, know that I have always had a churning in my spirit, a restlessness and a discontent and a suspicion about this whole charismatic renewal sensing in it a kind of conspiratorial element largely motivated by and engineered by Catholic authorities and I believe that this now is going to come into a full configuration and power. And the interesting thing is that just as ideology is no longer the divisive factor and will be sublimated in the interest of world economic and political peace, doctrine will be sublimated and made to be a factor that no longer stands as the divisive element between the great Catholic and Protestant church bodies. Those who think that doctrine is not a matter to be relegated to the dustbin for the conveniences and the expedencies of unity will find themselves embarrassingly irritating to those who pant after unity at any price.

So it's not at all an accident that in Revelation 6-9 that those who were slain were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. Doctrine is not some kind of antiseptic code. Doctrine is the word of God, the essential teachings of the faith that make the faith the faith and that if they are removed you have some kind of husk of a semantic kind of Christianity but without the power thereof.

Those that will be jealous for the word of God and insist upon the word of God will find themselves candidates for the things that I've just read from Revelation 6-9 to be slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. There's going to be a new basis, I believe, for ecumenical unity. It will not be the word of God because that has been the divisive thing.

That's what has separated Catholics from Protestants. A new basis will be signs and wonders. The very same factor by which the Antichrist establishes his political and economic sway by the demonstration of his supernatural power will also become the persuasive factor religiously.

And who can argue with signs and wonders? And who has the discernment to distinguish between lying signs and wonders and those that have their origin in God and the fulfillment of his purpose? Any of us here tonight have come to that kind of sensitivity? I'll tell you what, many of us here tonight and in Christendom at large are bored, restless, and discontent, looking for something. There's been something vacuous in our Christianity that for a season the charismatic thing seemed to fulfill but now it's waning. And that makes us all the more candidates for excitement, for diversity, for novelty, and many who are indiscriminating and lacking in discernment and looking for excitement will gravitate to signs and wonders which will be for them the confirmation that this must be of God.

You say, Art, how can we come to that quality of discernment that saves us from deception? Well, I know that there's a gift of discernment and I appreciate that but the discernment that I think that is wanting is that which is held by the church as the church corporately, a church that is, that has come to maturity, that speaks often one to another in the fear of the Lord, not about gossip or petty things but the things that are the issues that constitute our life. We have to start turning our chairs around. We have to start moving from looking at the back of our heads to speaking often one to another, iron sharpening iron to distinguish and to discern the currents and the subtlety of all of the things that are already moving in our generation and shall be brought to such a pitch of power and persuasiveness that except that we are dwellers in heavenly places, we will be victims of deception with all those who dwell on the earth.

And you'll notice if you look over the book of Revelation that there seems a continual reiteration of two categories of beings, those who dwell on the earth as against those whom the Lord will cull from the four corners of heaven. And I want to say that I believe that you can abide, you can live in Raleigh, Durham and either be an earth dweller or have your citizenship in heaven. You need to begin to understand that these are very real alternatives and categories and those who dwell on the earth, even those who call themselves Christian, but dwell on the earth, that's where their effectual abode is.

They look down rather than up. Those that look up are those who see an open heaven even when they're being stoned and see Jesus at the right hand of the Father and the glory of God. I'll tell you, I'm being forced because of the shortness of the time to compress, but this thing about Stephen, the first martyr, you know the first always prefigures the last.

The first is always a statement, it always is suggestive of things that are intrinsic principles that pertain to martyrdom as is in the case of Stephen. The fact that his face shone like an angel, the fact that he was in competition and contention with those who saw themselves as the doctors of religion, as the establishment and the men in places of authority, that there was a powerful antagonism by them against this man who was mere waiter on tables, a busboy. That his face shone like an angel and that even when he was being pelted with stones unto death, he looked up.

And I don't think it was the last moment's heroism or last moment's desperation, but I think that that was his habitual posture. He was in the earth, but he did not dwell there. He looked up at heaven like Paul who saw the things that were invisible and eternal and made his present afflictions both momentary and light.

Hey, this is not just little curiosities of history about the early church. This is nuts and bolts survival requirement for us. Except that we are of the stature and of the same substance and stuff and disposition

and mentality of a Stephen and a Paul, we'll find ourselves in the other camp that will oppose them unto the death.

Because we're moving to that final consummation where we'll be the one or the other. So I want to say a word about the social character of the world that we inhabit, what we can expect. The factors are already working.

It's just that they're going to become more pronounced. There's really nothing new, but that there's something inexorably working. Sorry for the fancy words.

I'm even sparing you from saying ineluctable, which I've got written here too. But what the two words suggest is this. There's an energy, there's a dynamism that is built into the very structure of the world itself that moves it in a compulsive way to a heating up to the things that are inflexible, cannot be altered, not to be overcome, which will eventuate in such filth, in such unmitigated evil, in such expression of violence and corruption as we would shudder now to contemplate.

I'll repeat that. Forces are working that make the world inescapably evil and corrupt. And we need to have an apocalyptic expectation.

If we had a three-day seminar, one of the messages is on apocalypticism. What was the mindset of the early church? It was apocalyptic. It expected a sudden conclusion to human history by the intervening, the coming of the Lord at a final moment of duress to vindicate the saints who remained.

That doesn't mean they just happened to be left over, but they have survived a bitter process of persecution that have put other saints asleep. Because those that are asleep in Christ will rise first. Asleep doesn't mean you retire.

Asleep means what happened to Stephen. That after he had said, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge, he fell asleep. The purposes of God for his earthly life were concluded.

And no man could have destroyed that life before that conclusion. We're going to find many falling asleep in Christ in that same way. I expect myself to be one.

It's not because I'm melodramatic. It's the very logic, the inescapable logic of true faith that invites opposition and persecution. The fact that we have not experienced it is a statement to our shame rather than a compliment to our faith.

And we have thought that persecution is a feature of Christian life in Iron Curtain countries or Africa shows how naive we are. It is not a geographical matter. It is a spiritual matter.

And you have only to come into the realities of the kind of faith that the world abhors where the darkness cannot abide the light to begin to experience the kinds of things that have historically affected true believers in every generation and will especially at the last. We need to be warned for our own children's sake about the power of the subliminal and overt appeals for merchandise that will make of them merchandise. I praise God that I have the advantage of more than a half century's existence and have been a depression baby and watched the whole phenomenon take place that how the simplicity of our life has been altered and what was first submitted to us as luxury becomes within a very short time necessity.

And necessities of such a kind that if you don't have them you think you're going to perish. Our whole lifestyle has become invested with goods and buying and selling and having and getting and spending and this is the inexorable thing. This is continually working.

It cannot be pacified. It must always seek for fresh market, fresh investment, fresh manipulation, fresh extortion and one aspect demographically of that market that increases because of the way things are constituted is our youth, our children. Already victims that are marketed in.

So we're going to see again this just unparalleled thing that ends up in making the souls of men merchandise as it says in the book of Revelation. These concerts, these sports figures, these multi-million dollar contracts for guys just getting out of college or a black boxer. You say well these guys deserve it because look what they bring to the box office.

That's exactly the point. It is so set up of course that it's enormously profitable. So they make 13, 15 million for a few minutes of work.

But what does that do to the whole value structure of the civilization that idolizes them for the particular ability that they have? We need to understand there's an enormous price being paid morally in the whole fabric of a civilization that pants after these glitzy superstars of the punk rock culture or sports or whatever it is and it's a powerful fascination for our own children. How many times as I travel like this do I stay in the homes of ministers in the bedrooms of their children and look at the walls covered with the posters of the sport or music figures. And so we just need to be alerted and to resist it is going to require sacrifice.

But unless we will we're going to find our children swallowed up and panting after idols that diminish the one whom they should adore and follow namely the Lord himself. And I just wonder about such kids in the high tech power of the equipment that these glitzy stars travel with going to one of these concerts and sound and sight and bombarding in their senses to come the next morning and sit in the church and listen to a pastor in monotone teaching Sunday school or giving a sermon. Everything is stacked against us but we need to be much more conscious of the kinds of forces that are at play at the world and that calculate and encourage a kind of impatient desire for gratification.

That everything is being put before them for products for having and what would happen for example if the economy collapses? What would happen if there would be a global economic distress? Or any other factor that makes gratification to be delayed? I think we're going to see an impatience that will express itself not only in anger but in violence. So I'm asking you to brace yourself and one of the factors at the end of the age and it has always characterized civilization in the final act final death guests is unmitigated violence which already you can't pick up a paper without reading about a teenage kid who has blown out the brains of his parents while they sleep but we're going to see an increase of violence that is senseless, brutal vile, malicious and cruel of a kind that will become so commonplace that we can no longer be astonished by it. Because the vexation and the exasperation of impatience in a world that has encouraged impatience that cannot be gratified will explode in the competition for space, for jobs for security, for having in violence in such ways that anarchy will threaten the civilized world and the only answer to world anarchy is world despotism and so it will be another factor that will encourage a kind of global imposition a system of restraints which is called the beast system.

I woke up a couple of mornings ago with the word obliterate that's what I get when I caught a peek of a program that the son of the pastor was watching at whose home I was staying called Robot Cop one of the most filthy mucky, vicious, explosive scenes. Have you noticed that you older ones, remember we used to

read books like *Gone with the Wind*? That it was nothing to read a book of four or five hundred or six hundred pages? I used to check out six books a month as a kid in Brooklyn, New York every month.

I was a reader there was no TV and then the age of the visible graphic thing came and reading began to decline because we're raising up a generation of culturally illiterate or non-literate people it's not that they can't read, they can read manuals and the technical ability but they do not enjoy reading they do not delight in words, in concepts in meditation and in thought which renders them non-composed it removes the very critical faculty that would be able to resist the enormous powers that this age would generate all these factors coming together at the final being brought to a boil and thawing over but I just noticed in the little exposure that I get like seeing this program it's so episodic, they're episodes but they only last ten seconds twelve seconds, fifteen seconds a

confrontation between a man and a woman a dark, surly look, an angry word or a hug and embrace then the next scene is a violence then the next scene this, next scene until the final conclusion in cars cartwheeling and exploding and boom boom and it's over where's the plot? where's the storyline? where's the development? where's the character development? we do not have it anymore it's just a bombarding of visual images of a violent and sensual kind to be brought to explosive conclusion, that's it hey, we're paying a price amusement we need just to dwell on that word that any word that is prefixed with the letter A means the negation of the word that follows atheist is one who denies God as not being amusement denies musing it nullifies to muse what does it mean to muse? to muse is to

reflect to muse is to think to muse is to contemplate the very thing that distinguishes mankind in its humanity has been stolen and we're not even alert and aware by a generation that has so emphasized amusement and always having to find a novel amusement and a more spectacular kind of thing that would catch the imagination and therefore it's on an inexorable downward corruption without remedy that becomes increasingly vile, vicious evil, and destructive an apocalyptic view that the church held 2000 years ago, much closer to the end than we presently are is that the world is irredeemably evil and we who have taken liberal arts courses don't really in our heart believe that we think somehow that progress is inevitable or things will be made better we need to line up with a biblical

expectation for the end and the two key words that will constitute the mentality of saints who will overcome is a proper eschatology and a proper apocalyptic view of the end the end is at hand and shall shortly come to pass and if I have been distinguished in any way in the small kinds of audience and following that I can be said to have it's always because I've been looked upon as a kind of end time spokesman and I want to tell you that I myself have never been so aware of the end even end time vocabulary can become another catch word, another kind of cutesy religious vocabulary which we don't in fact really believe we will have an end time mentality and a proper eschatological from the Greek word the end eschaton and a proper apocalyptic conclusion to the end of the age where we begin

to live as if we believe that that's true and we'll not regret the loss of our high fives or the vacation or something like that, Lord don't come yet I need first to enjoy this what we need to be saying is come Lord Jesus when I saw that filthy mucky episodic program on TV that other night where everything was obliterated and in the final conflict between the robot figure who is the hero, have we come to that, that a robot is a hero as against these murky guys with their pigtailed and their boom guns and they just aim it and pull the trigger, it doesn't just inflict damage, it obliterates the painful thing that is for them an irritant, like divorce obliterates like abortion obliterates to remove, this is a disposable age and we have not the patience and the fortitude and the stamina to see

things through as believers we won't stay in a fellowship if there's a problem and we'll look for an easier place or we'll give up the marriage what did Trump just say in New York, the multi-billionaire it's just not working out if ever I wanted to give a guy a knuckle sandwich, Lord forgive me it's just not working out oh tough, well I guess yes, that must be irritating, so what do you do scrap it and dispose of it and obliterate it as a vexing problem because you can afford to do it it only costs 20 million and a house in Connecticut, we may not have those advantages folks but we have subscribed to that mentality more than we realize to solve our problems through obliteration, remove the fetus, remove the marriage remove the fellowship or whatever it is everything is calculated toward

impatience and toward violent elimination of the problem just like the Jews in Nazi Germany they are our misfortune, so what do you do with them you remove them I'm concerned for my own kinsmen in Israel with the problem of the Palestinian that they don't find themselves tempted to a solution of the same kind through obliteration who has a penchant and a disposition for problem solving for believing God, for seeking his grace and for his wisdom and his counsel, for seeing something through and believing for the resolution that God can bring however difficult the problem so are we dwellers in the earth or in the heavenly place it's interesting that in Revelation 9.21 they repented not of their murders nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts the final

opposition to God has this character violent murderers violence as the alleviation of frustration almost like a magical way of removal, to remove the consequences of problems that our carnality has created and that we don't know how to solve and those that kill with the sword and with hunger and with death are called the beasts of the earth, it's not an accident that God calls it a beast system because it is bestial, opposed to God and to all that God intended for man in his image I had the experience of being in Switzerland on this overseas trip and he took me one night to Zurich, I was in Zurich showing the saints there the places where the first Anabaptist martyrs gave their lives and if you don't know what the word Anabaptist is shame on you this is the radical wing of the Reformation

that were burned at the stake drowned, imprisoned because they were considered, well it's a good question why could not the great religious Reformation bodies tolerate the existence of this radical minority of the faith who refused to take up the sword they were opposed to the use of violence they could not sanction the state as being the kingdom of God, they looked for another kingdom and another city and another builder whose maker was God and why could they be allowed to live their inoffensive lives they were industrious, they were neat but they were hounded, they were pursued they were vexed, they were driven and I took Swiss believers to the places where that had its origin in Zurich, of which they knew nothing, showed them where they were first thrown into the river, the first

meeting that was held in a house outside of a church building where the baptism, adult baptism was first performed and so on, the caves where they had their meetings and had a special escape chamber that if they were accosted the children could at least find exit I went into a cell a dungeon that still stands almost four centuries later and for the first time I realized that incarceration is torture that actually it would have been a greater mercy to be burned at the stake or drowned than to rot for twenty years in a cell where you could not stand upright, you could not stretch your arms out and just such a terrible repressive confinement and be allowed to rot there because you held a quality of faith that even the Reformation religious bodies could not abide nor tolerate and in that same

Zurich that was the seat of this radical Reformation wing rooted out and extirpated by the father of the Swiss Reformation in Zurich, a man by the name of Zwingli, whose statue stands outside the church with a

sword in one hand and the Bible in the other, who by the way died on a battlefield they have what they now call Needle Park, and they took me there one night, it was like a descent into hell, I had never seen anything like it in all my travels, to see these precious kids from middle class homes, beautifully dressed with their leather jackets and stuff with their sleeves up looking for a place to puncture a vein and blood running down arms and legs in a park that is given over for their use, where the city of Zurich provides free hypodermic needles to the tune of seven thousand a

night with a free AIDS testing station in some kind of humanistic logic that will save them from the increasing threat of AIDS by at least providing clean needles I've never seen anything more ghastly, I saw two precious girls, one holding the mirror for the other, trying to find a vein that had not yet been used in the neck and all I want to say about that tonight is this, that I think that that is a precursor, it foreshadows and shows what is going to be the necessary condescension of western societies everywhere to provide free needles, free prophylactics, free AIDS testing to save ourselves from teenage pregnancies, from AIDS and all these things.

It's society's last gasp, they don't know what to do in order to somehow quell or at least put some kind of lid on things that are burgeoning to epidemic proportions. But what happens when a society, particularly quote, a Christian society gives free needles and free AIDS tests, free prophylactics it may not be intended as such but what it morally means is this it's a condoning of the very evil that they're thinking somehow to repress. And that has a consequence for the moral fabric of society that further makes it a vacuum and ironically because people cannot find a life of moral significance which is what man, I think, made by God instinctively looks for, will find themselves in their desperation seeking a fix.

So in a word, what society is on is a kind of paradoxical rat maze that whatever they do in their attempt to defend themselves from the issues of the day further compounds the evil and makes it unthinkable. I'm expecting widespread disillusionment and rejection. Particularly perhaps in Eastern Europe where now a whole generation has the opportunity to taste the advantages of democracy and freedom.

But you know we need to ask what has that meant for us? And if the ultimate meaning of freedom is moral disillusion and decay and corruption they're going to find themselves more depressed and more dejected at the failure of this hope than ever they did under the greatness of a Marxist ideology and regime. And the thing that intrigues me about this is that the little bit that I know about the rise of Nazism is that the fertile ground for Nazism came in a Germany that had collapsed in its democratic aspirations that gave opportunity for the rise of Hitler in the condition of nihilism that pervaded that society. N-I-H-I-L-I-S-M.

Nihilism is a word that the sociologists invented to describe a 20th century phenomenon that never before existed in modern times and will be the pervasive factor at the end of the age that moved the whole world toward a global totalitarianism. A dejection and a depression of such abject hopelessness that expresses itself in a violence that doesn't give a rat, a gata damerung, a fiery conclusion where everything is brought down in people that are entirely without hope. The skinheads that are rising up in our communities are already the first representatives of what will become global movement.

What will this mean for the church if, and I'm not describing these things to cause panic, but how is a church going to fare in such a world of unmitigated evil and deepening moral crisis and corruption? I'll tell you what. In an age that was not as radical as that, most of us would have been content to remain in evangelical and charismatic situations and it would have satisfied basically our spiritual needs. But the very radical process taking place in the world will make that kind of conventional church situation

profoundly ungratifying.

And we're going to find a shift in the movement, I sense, in which true believers, sensing their need to stand in such an age as that, will be looking for a deeper quality of faith and relationship than what they can find in conventional and appropriate church environments. Those who have not the courage or the stomach or the desire or have not the need and don't see the need to come into a deeper quality of faith and relationship but can remain in such situations will find themselves irritated by those who are seeking a more radical quality of faith and even to the point where the one will call the other heretic and will begin to feel an oppression, if not a persecution against us, till we will come to the fulfillment of the Scripture, of the statement of Jesus himself, I believe, that they will kill us and claim they are doing God a service. If we go on to the radical quality of faith that we will need to stand in such an age as I'm describing, the emerging true church will finally grow sick of the hype and banal predictability of a merely phraseological Christianity.

It will seek the deeper reality of faith and relationship, paying the cost and increasingly taking on the visage, the appearance, of pilgrim, stranger, and sojourner in the earth. Would you say that describes us presently? Are we strange? Do we like to feel strange? The fact of the matter is we have been looking for a Christianity that is comfortably orthodox and yet does not require of us such a thing as will make us to be strange from those around us in the world or in Christendom itself. But I want to say that if we will go on to be the remnant and overcoming people of God, of very necessity, we will find ourselves taking on increasingly the very appearance of strangers, pilgrims, and sojourners in the earth.

We will not be able to go along with the muck, the filth, the violence, and the whole value reversal that will be taking place because it's already at work where evil becomes good and good becomes evil. A whole total value reversal, it's an insanity, it's an Alice in Wonderland, that because you hold biblical principles or the Ten Commandments, and notice what it says in Revelation, and they died, they had the testimony of Jesus, and they held the commandments of God. I believe that God's final people, and this would have been another message if we had had three times together, what are the definitive characteristics of the remnant church? People who hold the commandments of God.

Thou shalt not. In a world that says thou shalt, and that if you do not, you'll get a complex. And you'll do psychological damage to your kids or, after all, their alternative lifestyles and sexual modes of preference, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

And if you call their modes of preference an abomination in God's sight, according to its description in scripture, you're going to find yourself in a very touchy place. Because good is going to be called evil, and evil is going to be called good. What then will happen to those who stand for that which is good? Even today, we had a conference in San Francisco in the Principalities and Powers of the Air, in all places of that city, and a brother said, you know, Art, if any pastor in this city today will describe homosexuality, you know that even the word homosexual is a euphemism, that the word in the Bible is sodomy, and that if you identify it as that, and that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, His values have not changed, He still looks upon it as abomination, and that AIDS is the judgment of God of those who have recklessly not considered the warnings of God about that indulgence, that your life will not be safe in San Francisco today.

You know that if we're going to become strange, we're even going to look differently, and I believe, and I'm expecting, that the light that was in Stephen's face that shone like an angel will be increasingly our

experience also. Not some self-affected spirituality, or amen and hallelujah charismatica, but an authentic sanctifying work of God and the deep character and life of God's people, until they begin to exude the very light of God, and they're not even conscious of it. I don't know if anyone remembers, but in my earliest believing, I was just a few months old in the Lord, returning to the teaching system in California where I'd left as one of the leading faculty radicals to come back, so to speak, with the Bible under my arm and say, Jesus is the answer, and lose all my friends the first night back.

I was such anger and such bitterness and such filth and profanity that I had to get out of a moving car the next day as the woman at whose home I was staying, a Jewish colleague, broke out in such a violent filth against me because I was just a starry-eyed innocent believer who believed that he had been saved and that Jesus is the Christ. Well, I was at lunch one day, and this is what I want to relate to you, with another Jewish colleague, God bless her, taking pills and seeing the psychiatrist in a illicit relationship with another teacher against her husband's back, and I had been witnessing to her to the ability that I had as a young believer, but this time I was just eating very silently. And we were eating opposite to each other on the table, and I could feel something coming out of this woman, billowing out like daggers shooting at me in a vile, bilious hatred, and I finally looked up, and she was foaming at the mouth.

I hadn't said boo. And finally she slapped her fork down. She said, even when you're silent, she said, you're a living accusation.

Our very unwillingness to participate in what certain segments of Christendom will increasingly condone as good. Our very posture, our pilgrim's faces, the very sanctification that God is working in us, will elicit that same kind of angry opposition against us. We need to anticipate it.

And one of the reasons I was in Africa with Gary was a memorial service in Zimbabwe for sixteen believers who had been hacked to death two years before. Precious saints of whom the world is not worthy. You are equal and they exceed you in every regard.

Multilingual, skilled, articulate, people who could have made their success in the world hands down, choosing to live in a remote segment of this nation, where there had been a civil war, and was now under black authority, and many of the whites made their exodus, but many of the Christians remained in the hope of working out a new quality of relationship because of their faith, that this nation would not become a bloodbath, and that there could be a basis for harmony between the races, not through some socialistic or humanistic design, but on the basis of the faith and the redeeming power of the Lord Jesus. And so they chose, they were led by God to this remote location, never armed themselves, an area that was hostile and victimized often by bands of these marauding, racist, Marxist-oriented guerrillas, and sure enough, one night, bang, the end came to them in a very certain way. And I had an opportunity to be at that service and to share, and to hear from the black brother who was the witness of their martyrdom.

In fact, I also in Johannesburg interviewed a 15-year-old girl who was 13 at that time, who is presently seeing a psychiatrist because she was allowed to survive and was given a note to explain the cause of the death of her spiritual family, but is seeing a psychiatrist because the baby of one of the mothers was ripped from her arms and had his brains splashed out at her feet. And this black brother said to me, you know, Artie said, there was not a sound, a cry, there was not a pleading for their lives. They went as lambs to the slaughter.

It came in a moment of suddenness. It was a moment of extremity, but when it came, they had such a sublime confidence in the sovereignty of God that though they could not understand the mystery of their

death and why it should be required, because they were doing wonderful works. They were building fish ponds and chicken coops and irrigation projects to lift up the economy of a retarded section of that nation that for seven years of drought had suffered starvation, and yet God allowed them to be taken like that.

Here's what I want to say, saints. What we are in a moment of extremity and an unsuspecting moment is what, in fact, we are. What we exhibit is what we are.

And something was exhibited by their patience and suffering and in death and not pleading for their earthly lives because they were already in a heavenly place. And it was all the same to them when they lived or died if the one or the other would glorify God. They had a modest mentality before it was required of them, and I believe it's a mentality that will characterize the final remnant church of Jesus Christ at the end of the age.

And it's not a mentality that we're going to find in a last moment's heroism when something comes upon us suddenly but one that we need now to seek for and to establish and to live in. For martyrdom is not a prescription of how to die, it's a prescription of how to live. If my marriage has taken any turn for the good or the wonderful grace that has come, it's the acknowledgement that martyrdom is how you live now.

Patience and forbearance and meekness and the confidence in God's utter sovereignty. Even when things go wrong and they are inexplicable and we have not been warned. We've got a long way to go, but we need to gird our loins and to understand what the decade of the 90s means and seek the Lord to be a prepared people who will not collapse when opposition comes against us but will glorify him even in our suffering.

What will we do if the only way to sustain life is to take the mark of the beast? And to take the mark of the beast is not only to compromise your faith but to suffer an eternal punishment from God. This is not some innocuous thing. It has an eternal ramification and many will take that mark because buying and selling and sustaining their physical and bodily lives has a greater priority than loyalty to him.

I want to suggest that we need to begin now to pray, to ask the Lord for alternatives to taking the mark of the beast. One thing we need to do is to begin to extricate ourselves from a world system that wants us to be utterly dependent on its plastic carts and dependent on its systems which have everything, every right thing to commend it in terms of convenience if not luxury. But convenience will be our undoing.

I just saw a brother on this trip who's building a \$350,000 house for speculation where he said, Art, we're going to have to live in it for tax advantage. I couldn't bring I didn't have the courage to say it but what I wanted to say to him and I pray the spirit of God will communicate it is what price are you paying for that convenience? What price are you paying for that advantage, that tax concession morally for your own children to live in a grandiose \$350,000 house that will further corrupt them than where they presently are which is presently not a good place. We pay a price for convenience and I don't say this as a thus saith the Lord but every time that we submit to the world, its system, its mentality for convenience or for luxury or for gratification because it seems to be the mode of life and everyone condones it something I think is embossed on our hand with every transaction.

I have a sense that this Mark of the Beast is not some last final moments in printing but something already in progress every time we yield ourselves to the world in its spirit for convenience sake or conversely resist it and yield to the Lord with taking on so to speak his name and the day of the Lord will reveal what has been successively embossed by continuous transactions either with the world or with God. We need to

know that the issue of the Mark of the Beast is not a last moments decision, it's a decision being made now and being made daily. I want to suggest this to you and not because I'm in it but I believe that agriculturally based communities of God's people who are able to sustain life through their own labor and faith in the growing of food and the providing of shelter might be one of the most viable if not only alternatives to taking that mark on us at the end of the age.

I've been in that now for 10 to 15 years and it's no picnic. In fact it's a suffering before it's a glory. To live with God's people in that intensity of life called community with that intimacy and that unescapableness and the humiliation of being found out of where you really are and the disillusionment that comes to find out where God's people really are is a veil through which we must pass.

Many of us are in a state of deception even tonight about the condition of the church and about our own condition because we have never been tried. We have never been at that excruciating and demanding place that reveals where in fact we are. The three months that I was overseas and the little nucleus of the souls that are now with us up in that property in northern Minnesota whom we've known for years.

One family had been with us in the early of Ben Israel and are back again and another family have known that family for over ten years and they loved each other and would think nothing of traveling from Indiana to Dallas, Texas to spend Christmas together. So much did they love each other until they had to live on the same property together. I came back just in time to avert a complete explosion with resentments and bitterness and vexation and accusations that was shocking and this precious woman said and she was gray when I saw her when I had left her she had a real nice, cheery, charismatic confidence.

She was one of the most stable and precious women. She said, I've lost my glow. I said, praise the Lord.

That glow would not have endured to the end. It was only kind of like the blush of the rose it will have served you charismatically but it would never have sustained itself likely to the end and of necessity that thing had to go and you must now go through a period in which you're stripped even of that into a terrible, humiliating grayness to finally come progressively to the radiance of God that is the statement of his true sanctifying work because the communities of God's people are not just a physical provision to sustain our bodily lives, it's a provision for sanctity as well as life. If it's not going to be on a farm this much as needed, we have got to come to something more than a succession of Sunday services and mid-week Bible studies.

We have got to welcome the intensification of our life together, shared life together and I think when we'll do it spiritually and socially we'll find also that we'll be doing it economically and that this is not only an end time provision for our sustenance, it's the very genius of God to make of us saints that will glorify him to the very end of the age. You know what the heck of it is? That as your light shines and you're more visibly radiant, that very thing will invite an opposition against it because darkness abhors and cannot abide the light. We make ourselves candidates for persecution among them by coming in increasingly to the sanctifying light of God.

So if you want to play it safe just stay where you are. Don't trouble the Lord for any deeper process of the refining of your life and I'll tell you what you may find when the smoke clears you may yet call yourself Christian but you'll be part of a great falling away that Paul describes as the necessary and critical factor before the end concludes.

Well just as a final word start checking and jumping through this statement about the mystery of suffering that somehow purposes of God are served just as it was in Zimbabwe because if you're reading Revelation it says that power was given to the beast to overcome the saints and yet in being overcome something is wrought, something is exhibited that has to do with the very purposes for which God has created the church, namely the demonstration of the manifold wisdom of God to the principalities and the powers of darkness that wisdom was exhibited in the sufferings of Jesus on the cross that broke the power of those powers and will be concluded by our exhibiting his Christ likeness in the extremity of our suffering as we come to the conclusion of age and the fulfillment of the mystery of

suffering that deserves a whole message but just to say this if you've been spoiled by the prosperity message and that somehow if you're suffering you're out of the faith I pray God that we can spit out the rest of that and align ourselves with a truly prophetic and apostolic mentality that looks upon suffering as not some dread thing but even as the early Anabaptist saw it the very confirmation of God's call and a privilege it gives us a crown an eternal reward which ought to be a conspicuous and conscious element in our present life is the anticipation of the heavenly reward for that which we will endure in the earth for his sake I feel so foolish saying that just in this moment I just feel like an anachronism just to speak to you the things that have always been the constituent

elements of true faith seem so jarringly out of place in our age that to speak about suffering the eternal rewards, the modest crown is odd it ought not to be is there something wrong with that vocabulary that it seems odd to speak it or is there something wrong with us that it has been so out of our consideration that when it is sounded even it seems to us strange and it ought to be normative and the last word is this in the final couple of weeks of that overseas trip there was one message that God repeated night after night the message of sanctification especially in 2nd Corinthians 6 get me out come out of her and touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you and be a father unto you and you shall be my sons and my daughters says the Lord God almighty you know what I want to say

saints that I was made very conscious in that same overseas trip that there is a dimension of the knowledge of God palpable knowledge I'm not talking about head trip of a kind that sustains you in temptation and trial that was lacking in my own life that I believe is caught up in the final and the ultimate demonstration of God as father when I think of my own prayer life I often pray to the Lord when I speak about God or the Lord or Jesus but I rarely ever have used the word father I grew up without a father and the whole subject of fatherhood was a mystery to me but I think that beyond the biographical facts of my life that the absence of the consciousness of God as father which is critical for the end times was because I was not radically separated from the things that God abhors get me

out and touch not the unclean thing and I will, it's a promise to receive you and be a father unto you and you shall be my sons and my daughters says the Lord God almighty and I thought that's strange, I've never seen that before why didn't you say says the Lord why this additional signature the Lord God almighty and just put the testis in your spirit I think because there's a dimension of power that comes from God not power to serve but power to stand, power to endure that comes with the knowledge of God as father that is available to those who will be sons and daughters who are radically separated from the world so much as not even to touch the unclean thing.

I just destroyed my American Express card after 20 years and you cannot believe how I have been a target of mailings from the American Express company as if I was the most exemplary customer that they have ever had. Appeal after appeal for a clock, a calendar, a fountain pen if only I will reestablish my card

with them I'll tell you what, it's left a little hole in my wallet that was like a comforting presence to go overseas and not to know what's going to happen is what happened to us when Kenya Airlines was five hours late and we couldn't make the connecting flight at Nairobi that would have taken us from Cairo to Johannesburg and had to spend a night in Nairobi that we didn't plan it cost \$100 for one night to get out of the airport, \$5 each to get in the next day, \$20 each for departure tax, so much for the taxi, the cheapest hotel we could find owned by a Jew, to whom I left a copy of Ben Israel and a word it cost us \$100, but what if we didn't have it wouldn't it be comforting to have a little plastic card to lay down wouldn't it be convenient, isn't it a security and I don't know that it's a particular requirement for me or for all of God's saints that God is wanting himself to be our confidence and our security even if we got to stay all night in the airport so I'll just ask you to begin the process of extrication the coming out from a world, a system predicated upon convenience and comfort and assurances that has not its foundation in God, but in man and to welcome the trials the dealings of God that will fit us to be an overcoming remnant people who have the testimony of Jesus and keep the commandments of God let's bow our heads before the Lord who in his love is speaking these things at the inception of this decade that we might be sobered, alerted have a sense of what this decade means and desire his preparation that we might stand before the Lord

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