

K-494 the Crucifixion of God (1 of 2)

by Art Katz

The crucifixion of Jesus is the central event of the Christian faith and the key to understanding the human condition and God's judgment for sin.

Duration: 1:12:01

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 3:23, 2 Corinthians 5:19, Ephesians 1:3

Topics: "Cross"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding and acknowledging the past, particularly the Holocaust, as a significant event in modern history. He highlights the need for Christians to embrace the past and anticipate the future. The speaker discusses how the Holocaust was a result of a distorted view of humanity and the consequences of living in deception. He also emphasizes the need for a perspective from eternity to make sense of such immense suffering and human depravity.

Transcript

So we're just looking to you, my God, to redeem these times and that we're moving into such an anti-Christ period in which the things that took place in Nazi Germany will now become global. No nation will be exempt. And we're going to have to give explanation to bewildered numbers, and particularly Jews, who will be at the receiving end of this final Holocaust.

And I'm asking, my God, that our conversation and discussion will result in the salvation of those who would otherwise have perished in their confusion, in their perplexity, in their bewilderment. Help us to understand the times and open up categories for us. Reality itself, the deepest revelation of reality and of the God of reality that comes in the most painful circumstances and instances in history.

We thank you and give you the praise of Jesus' name. Amen. Well, in the last session, I talked about the most renowned Jewish authority on the Holocaust, Elie Wiesel.

He's a great writer and has won the Nobel Prize, I think, even for literature or for peace. His whole family was wiped out at Auschwitz. He was the sole survivor.

And the book that we read from at the beginning was called *The Night*, and I commend it to anyone. It'll rob you of your sleep, but you need to be robbed. You need to have something come in to your spirit, something of the magnitude of this horror, or else the rest is academic.

Unless you can smell burning flesh or touch the smokestacks and see the apparatus of extermination, this will go right over your head. So one of the great concerns of the Jewish community is preserve the memory of the Holocaust, lest for your generation it becomes only an abstract word. I think one of my great shocks as a history teacher was how mindless that generation of students was to the things in which I was brought up.

I fed, I teathed on that. The Holocaust was for me, and remains to this day, the single greatest ethical event of modern history. And I was astonished that there could be people who didn't know about it, or what is even worse, didn't care about it.

So you're going to have to do some homework to recapture the past, because it still lives. That which is past is now, God says in Ecclesiastes 3.15, and God requires that which is past. Your generation is not oriented toward the past.

You're a now generation. I think Pepsi-Cola invented the phrase, but it's true. You don't want to look back, and equally you have as little disposition to look forward.

The two things that distinguish a Christian and make a Christian a Christian is the embracing of the past and the anticipation of the future. If you lose those two things, you're just a cardboard cutout. You're a papier-mâché saint, and you go up like a puff under the first pressure.

You need to fight the good fight of faith and wrestle for the past, history, and also for the anticipation of things that are future and eternal. One of the blessings of this subject is, when I read it in the first session, is that secular learning cannot give adequate explanation of this phenomenon. It requires an answer from eternity.

Only a perspective from eternity can make sense for something that has taken place in time of this proportion. I had a chance to speak to this man after he'd given a lecture some years ago, in which, though he had lost his faith, having been deeply orthodox as a boy, when he saw the horrors of the Holocaust, and saw, in fact, describes a boy his age being hung at Auschwitz, someone said, where is God now? And he couldn't answer. Where is God in the midst of unspeakable sufferings, not only for adults of the six million, one and a half million were children.

Where was God, who is the God of mercy and of love, at that time? If you don't ask that question, you're just missing it. We've got to wrestle through and even be brought into a dark night of the soul, even be willing to have a little cheapy categories threatened or challenged, even though the categories are correct. Correct ain't enough, unless it's vibrantly true and awesomely powerful in your conviction.

Merely to be correct is not enough. The women that we talked about the other day and prayed for, who have gone bonkers, were more than correct, but evidently they did not have an authentic faith that could stand against the temptation that completely brought them down shatteringly. One of the beauties of this subject is, it attacks all of our categories, like the one I'm just mentioning.

Where is God? And what kind of a God is he whom we thought to be righteous, merciful, and just, to look down upon that horror and to allow it? Either he was powerless to interfere, or he didn't give a rat. Either way, if either of these things are true, God is no longer God. Can you follow that? And if God is no longer God, there's only one expression that I know that can answer to that, that's not even in English, it's in Yiddish, oy vey.

If God is not God, oy vey, woe is me if there's not a God who is God. And if we have been mistaken, as many Jewish commentators say we have been, and now liberal Christian theologians as well, that we need to our doctrine of God. We need to review our Christology.

That our understanding was perhaps naive, because how could Christ have come, and this follow? Or how could God be God, and this take place? These are the questions that men have not been able to answer, and their faith has suffered shipwreck. If you really want to get into this, a classic book by a Jewish rabbi is called *After Auschwitz*. Richard Rubenstein, now a professor of religion and philosophy at Florida State University, whose thesis is, you can no longer hold a tenable view of God.

The God of tradition that sustained generations, both of Christians and Jews, is dead, and the Holocaust proves it. And yet he argues for the continuation both of Christianity and Judaism, so long as we don't get serious about our doctrine, like for example, resurrection, and just continue to provide men with a kind of an ethical and religious activity that takes the rough edges off of their personalities, and does some social good. Did you ever hear of anything more cynical? And he is speaking this, and has had a wide audience among Christians.

So the faith is really under the most radical review for this one principal reason. There has not been an adequate explanation of the Holocaust. Men were so shocked, they were so devastated, that there was no literature for the first 25 years.

Maybe some journal of a survivor's experience, but no literature in the sense of study, no analysis, no critique, no examination for meaning. Do you know why? Men could not bring themselves to it. They were so seared, they were so inwardly devastated, they had to turn away from considering it altogether.

So I gave a message by the grace of God in 1977, and 2,000 people went berserk at the hearing of it, and I came home with that cassette tape in my hand, thinking, now I know why God has brought us to community. He wants a book from this, and a book that would challenge not only the Jew, but the church, not only the church in America, but the church in Germany. The theme is the Holocaust is not an aberration.

It is not a historical accident. God works in history, and he works through men and through nations as the rod of his chastisement, but the Holocaust is his work. It's his strange work, and it is his judgment, and more than that, it's not a capricious judgment.

It's a judgment that is the fulfillment of what he promised would come in the latter days upon an unbelieving and unrepentant Israel, and he spoke that at the commencement of our coming into the land thousands of years ago. So you know what I said to Elie Wiesel? I said, you say you're studying the scriptures with Rabbi twice a week? Great. For a man who had lost his faith in the Holocaust, to what degree, I said, are you willing to acknowledge that the Holocaust and all of our Jewish suffering historically is the consequence of the judgments promised by God in the scriptures, and particularly in the concluding chapters of Leviticus and Deuteronomy? That's what you call a question, and his answer was devastating.

He looked at me for a stunned moment, and he said, I refuse to consider that. If anything needs to be critiqued and put under a spiritual microscope or have a scalpel inserted and opened, it's that statement, because I want to say that that statement is not just the statement of a man. It's the statement of a nation.

It's the statement of a people. It's the statement of a mentality. It's a pervasive statement of a whole humanistic worldview that if there were no other reason for the Holocaust, but that mindset betrayed or revealed in that statement, it would be enough, in my opinion, to bring the Holocaust.

God must judge a people who can say, I refuse to consider that. The first word makes the whole statement that follows suspect. I. The elevation of man above God who speaks through his word.

Remember in Tuesday night's Bible study? How do we know that we already have received every blessing in the heavenly places? If many of them, if not maybe the totality of them, is not to be experienced in our feelings or to be measured or to be known experientially, and yet they are palpable blessings of a particular kind called heavenly, how can we know that? Because the knowing of it saves us from disillusionment and gives us hope, because he has said so, that we have been given every blessing in the heavenly places. That's why we believe it, and believing it changes everything. Man's attitude toward the word of God is the issue.

To say, I refuse to consider that, is not just to say, now it may well be that God has said that there'll be judgment in the latter days, that at night you would wish it were day and day you would wish it were night, and they would come after you with the sword and there'd be terror from within and from without and in the chamber, infants and sucklings and old men and so on. It may well be that God says that, but whether he says it or not, I refuse to consider that. What underlies that statement, that though it may be true, I refuse to consider it? You've got to get into this mentality.

And by the way, the thing that makes this being Jewish significant is that to be Jewish is to be man. The epitome of man and ultimate man is what Jews are, celebrating what is in man. In fact, the pride of what kind, in terms of the Holocaust, six million Jews annihilated, ethnic pride, the pride that says it is inconceivable that we have either committed or are capable of sin or transgression of a kind that would justify something like this from God.

I don't care what he has said. I know what we are. I know what I am.

I'm a nice guy. I've never killed anybody. I've never raped anybody.

In fact, until recent history of Israel, Jews can really boast in that. We were exemplary. You don't find Jews who are life beaters in times past.

You find them now. You find worse than that now. But we've had a kind of secluded ghetto history where we've not been provoked to demonstrate what is our condition, which we share with all men.

So we have a delusion, and I have lived with that delusion for the first 35 years of my life. In the midst of fornications, and anything that I would practice, which of course was not just fornication, it was art. It was love.

It was catching the moment. It was the way in which men like me can so sanctify, so justify their conduct. It's no longer sin.

In fact, if you want to know something about modern Jews, to this very moment, we're non-confessmentists. We've had a lobotomy. We have no concept of the word sin.

Jews as a people do not have a sin consciousness. In fact, it's a real moot question to ask who among men does. I know Christians subscribe to the doctrine of sin, but what does their true heart say? How many of us so repetitiously and secretly have a Jewish mentality that think that we're not all that bad, and really we're nice guys, and if we did commit a boo-boo, it was circumstantial.

And you know why I say all that to say this, to get us into our subject? What is the single greatest demonstration that God's statement of the human condition, of human depravity, I'm trying to think of the words, of a depravity, of a sinfulness so rife and so pervasive that there's no remedy by correction, by personality courses, by discipline, by any kind of activity man himself can originate, that the only answer is to become a new creature. Where is the statement of human depravity? And nobody wants to see that. Everything that's in the flesh doesn't want to let Ishmael die.

If there's some way that he can be preserved, sinful flesh does not always express itself through rape and white battling or murder. It can express itself through intellect, through culture, through music, through art, through business, through science, through accomplishment, and we tend to look on that aspect of it. But God says, it's rotten all the way through.

Without me, you can do nothing. That in man is no good thing at all. And if God were to mark iniquity, who can stand it? You are too young to have known that, really, and deeply.

What sin have you committed that has struck your soul with such depth that you know the unspeakable depths of the depravity of man in your own heart? You're nice guys. In fact, most of us are. And in fact, if we do commit a sin, as I said the last time, the nature of sin that makes sin sin is to disguise its character as sin.

So we don't see it as a horror. One of the great statements that I've read in a book on Abraham by F.B. Myers, how come that Abraham, when he was called to sacrifice Isaac, no ifs, buts, ands, or butts. He rose early in the morning, he cut the wood, he saddled the ass, he didn't even discuss it with his wife, and took his son and he set forth with his servants to make of Isaac a sacrifice.

No, not a question, not a ripple, not anything. Total surrender to the requirement of God. But it's not the surrender of some mindless dupe.

Or as God says, so I got to. You know what F.B. Myers says? Abraham, knowing the terror of sin, rose early in the morning, saddled his ass, cut the wood, he knew the terror of sin. If you have to put before God a request of all the things that you would have him to reveal, the wisest thing you could ask for would be this.

Because to have everything else, to know about the glory of God, or holiness, or the church, or last days things, and not to know this, is not to know anything. You have no foundation, and it condemns your other knowledge to shallowness. This is at the foundation.

God says so in his word, but men have not read that word, or refuse to consider that word. And so what has God done in order to amplify his word, and to reveal the truth of the condition of man as evil, of sinful, that a righteous God cannot abide. That something has to be done over this sin question, and yet man himself is incapable of doing it.

Because whatever he does, shares his own corruption, his philanthropy, his good deeds. What did you just do now? What is Yom Kippur now? Yom Kippur, the day of atonement now, without a temple, without

a priesthood, without a sacrifice. It's a day of fasting, in which you watch the clock nervously for it to be over.

It's a day of good deeds, mitzvot, philanthropy or charity, and prayer. But not even prayer out of the heart, prayer out of the prayer book. As if this is acceptable in God's sight, for the hideousness of a condition from which he has to turn his face.

So what is the single great event, which God himself had to perform, man being inept and incapable, to judge sin and to atone for sin? You know a way to understand the word atonement? At one meant with God. My arm is not short that it cannot save, nor is my ear heavy that it cannot hear, but your sins, saith the Lord, have separated you from me. This separation of sin with the Holy God, if it's carried into eternity, is an unspeakable anguish of soul.

So what does God do? He sends his only begotten Son to pay the penalty for sin. So here I'm answering my question in the paper that I've written about this man's statement, I refuse to consider that, as being the evidence of a condition that still remains, seeing that our ableist spokesmen still continue to sound it. The unhappy fact is that interpreting catastrophe as the consequence in judgment for sin is totally incompatible with contemporary Jewish self-assessment.

We cannot see ourselves as deserving of such judgment. The fault lies, I think, in the Jewish rejection of a previous tremendum, that of the crucifixion of Jesus. This was not only the statement of righteous God's judgment for sin, but the profoundest revelation of our human condition, of the exceedingly sinfulness of sin, in what was required to expiate it.

God's statement on sin is Jesus on the cross. Here's a little classic, a gem, by the sisters of Mary in Germany, or one of the sisters who is now suffering Alzheimer's disease, and she's looking at a famous painting, which I went to see in Colmar, France. It's worth the trip, save your pennies, and see this masterpiece of the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus by a painter called Grunwald, who died around 1525.

It's a holy ghost masterpiece, and here's a fragment of it. I wish I had this very large, maybe we can pass it around. Can you see from where you are? It is an unspeakable horror.

Your eyes have to be averted. I'd seen pictures of Jesus, but never anything compelling or penetrating. They were always sappy, smooth.

They did not convey horror. The holocaust is horror. In fact, he looks like a victim of the holocaust, maybe even an ultimate victim.

There's no way that a man could paint this except that he was inspired by the Holy Spirit. Here's the detail of the feet, and the feet do not even look human. They look like animals' feet.

They're gnarled. That he was marred more than any man. There was no beauty that we should desire him.

Now, what is on the cross here is the whole meaning of the book from Genesis to Revelation. This is the key. This is what God is about.

This is the whole faith is summed up and brought together in this one event, Christ crucified. Remember what Paul said? I refuse to know anything but Christ and him crucified. This was central to Paul's whole

apostolic view of the faith, and it has been lost to the modern Christians.

We do not dwell on this, but we should. Here's a detail of the hand nailed to the cross. Everything is gnarled, the fingers.

When you see the painting, they're spittled. The mouth is open in like a last paroxysm of death. There's nothing beautiful, there's nothing spiritual, certainly nothing religious.

In fact, in this book, *The Crucified God*, speaking of that crucifixion, this German theologian says, true faith begins where the atheist thinks it should end. In fact, I would paraphrase that and say, true faith begins where the religionist thinks it should end. In other words, this is anti-religious.

Religion would be a Christ with roses, a garland around the body, or suspended like a ballet dancer, or some kind of thing where we would cluck our tongues and say, oh pity, that he had to die like that. Those terrible Jews and Christ killers, or those Romans, is to miss the point entirely. This was no accident.

This was the calculated act of God. It resonates through all the scriptures. Jesus didn't experience it only in his final moment.

His whole walk was a cross walk. This destroys all your categories. All the more, if the man who is depicted here is not just a man, but God himself in man.

It says God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. It says that in all of our afflictions, he was afflicted. God sold the world, he sent his only begotten son.

We repeat that, but we don't really understand what God paid. Where did this take place, but in Jerusalem? In the fulfillment of Jewish scripture of a Messiah who would come and be a sin bearer? That the prince must come and be cut off, but not for himself, but for the transgressions of Israel? In what book is that found? Daniel, I think chapter 9. In Isaiah 53, he was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquity.

Who is the Allah but Israel? Who is the he but the crucified one, very God himself? So, we'll have to take a look at this to see the things that are in the skin from the flagellations and the crown of thorns. I don't want to sentimentalize this. That would be working against God.

Here she writes a little commentary about each of these portions. The crown of thorns is especially a sign of disgrace. Whoever wants to walk with Jesus in true dedication must be willing to bear disgrace, but such disgrace will bring an intimate fellowship of love with Jesus.

Remember what we talked about Tuesday? How do you abide in Christ? By not sinning and not offending the Holy Spirit, but abiding in Christ is to abide in the crucified Christ. I can remember in years past giving an invitation about how many would come to Jesus in this form and to be joined with him in this death and in this humiliation and in this suffering and in this scandal. This was being hung on the tree.

Cursed is every man who hangs on a tree. This was outside of Jerusalem in the garbage dump. This was between criminals.

This was before jeering mobs and multitudes come down and we will believe you. There's no way that that holocaust can be summarized. It lies beyond words, just like the holocaust that came thousands of years later.

And I'm saying there's an unbroken connection between this one and that one. And here's what I'll say. Because the Jewish community refused to consider the revelation of what was given in the crucifixion of Jesus, of God, nothing says more about God as God than God crucified.

Can you understand that? There are a lot of things that can be said about God, but the deepest things and the most revealing things about God is God on the cross. That's God's own act. It's God's own conception.

It's calculated to do something and also to say something. And what it says is what God is really like in himself and as he desires for men to know him. Not to know God crucified is not to know God.

And you can call your God Jesus, but unless it's the Christ who was crucified, and you understand that, you have another God of your own imagining whom you've labeled Jesus, but you'll not have the effect and the benefit and the power of the one who is crucified and also raised and ascended. This is critical. This is God.

This is the nexus. This is where it all comes together. And to miss it here is to miss it everywhere.

And I'm saying that Jewish tragedy in modern times is that missing. That's why Jesus wept over Jerusalem and said, you have missed the day of your visitation. Oh Jerusalem, oh Jerusalem, how often would I take you under my wings, but you would not.

And now you're going to suffer this, this, and this. Your house shall be left to you desolate. You'll be cast out of the land.

Your priesthood will be dispersed and destroyed. Your temple will be no more. There'll not be sacrifice.

There'll not be blood atonement. You'll be without covering. The word kaphora and from the word from which kippur, young kippur is derived, is covering.

You'll be without a defense and a covering for your sin and therefore every demonic thing has full and free sway to attack you and has. I can't, I don't have a word saints to say how costly it has been for the Jewish community to have sidestepped this event and made it a non-event by their unwillingness to consider it as judgment and who's, who can catch what I'm aiming at. That's exactly the statement that could be made about the holocaust.

History has come full circle and mankind and the Jewish community and even the German nation and even the church have not understood or what have what have not wanted to understand the depths of the meaning of the tragedy of the holocaust as being the judgment of God in the same way as Jews have been unwilling to consider that 2,000 years ago for their own experience. Not only did it unleash and set in motion historical factors that made the holocaust of the Nazi time inevitable, but it set in motion not only the failure to understand God as God, but to understand man as man. Do you follow that? If you miss God, you miss man.

The doctrine of God and the doctrine of man in Christian theology are related and who can think of a text in which the profound revelation of God as God, it also expresses the profound revelation of man as man to the one who sees it in a way in which he's almost devastated by the view of himself that he could not have glimpsed until he saw the Lord. Isaiah 6, the prince of the prophets, saw the Lord high and lifted up. Don't forget he was already prophesying and prophesying profoundly of the woes that would come upon Israel being God's spokesman and considered the prince of prophets.

But when the sixth chapter comes and he sees the Lord high and lifted up, isn't it interesting that lifted up, Jesus said, I will not know me until, how does he say, until I be lifted up and draw all men unto myself. That lifting up maybe is a metaphor for the revealing of God as he in fact is and not as we thought him to be. The worst deception of all deceptions is an erroneous view of God.

And that view can be poetic. It could be spiritualistic. It could be benevolent.

It could have wonderful sounds. It could eventuate in wonderful works and philanthropies. I'm describing the Jewish community at its best.

But it is deception all the more for those reasons. And the end thereof is holocaust. How does God break us finally out of our stubborn insistence on our view of God as being superior to his own revelation? He sent his son to die for sin as sin.

We could see what sin meant for God and what it needs to be mean for us. And we turn away our faces from them and refuse to consider him. We have our own view.

Man is not bad. In fact, man is progressively improvable. You know that every modern day conception upon which the modern world rests is essentially a Jewish view that has come out of the rejection of Jesus.

Progress, human perfectibility, is totally a humanistic view, only made possible when the view of God about man is rejected. Some of you probably have heard me talk about German civilization and how it had become an idolatrous substitute for Jews. Up till the advent of Hitler, Germany was looked upon as the ultimate civilization.

And they had lost their biblical orientation long before. There was no expectation of a messiah who would come in his own person. It would be a messianic age.

And the end of it would be the kind of civilization Germany was already exhibiting in culture, philosophy, ethics, science, and literature, and all of these things. The Jewish view of man was enforced by the German civilization in which they lived. And that's why I believe God had used Germany to bring the suffering of the Holocaust upon the Jew.

That this exalted notion of man, where they could not expect that man could ever do the kinds of things that were done, had to come by the people who were the projection of their own view of man as being exalted. To be a German Jew was the highest kind of jury. And long before World War II, when Polish Jews would come into Germany as immigrants, the German Jews would look very contemptuously upon them, because they were religious, they were orthodox, they had long beards, they were from the städel, from the villages, they were from the ghetto, whereas they saw themselves as emancipated and reflecting the highest standards of German civilization.

You can't understand the tragedy of the Holocaust coming from German hands unless you understand how Jewry celebrated German civilization, which is to say, celebrated man. They had an erroneous view of man, and God allowed them to live out that make-believe thing as he does with us for a certain period of time, and then the thing catches up with you. Reality must win out.

You can go so long in a view that is a myth or a deception, it could even serve the most commendable purposes, but there comes a time when reality can no longer tolerate it, and something has to break

through. The longer that that deception has gone on, the more severe and horrendous the comeuppance that follows. That's a lesson that ought to instruct all of us.

The longer you allow a condition of deception, and however long you can get away with it, and it might even have a certain efficacy, a certain benevolence, you're a nice guy under that deception. You're much nicer that way than if you were submitting to the sanctifying work of God, which you're not so nice, but one day your nice guy thing blows up in your face, and you find yourself capable of the most horrendous conduct. God will not be mocked.

Reality is the thing, and the heart of reality is God, not as we would like him to be, or the kind of God who will do our bidding and run our errands, and we can make nice and call that God Jesus, but God as he in fact is, and where he is most profoundly revealed in the way that he chooses to reveal himself at the cross in judgment. It's painful to look at some of these pictures, and I praise God that the same spirit that inspired the horrendous picture of the suffering of Jesus, you can walk around on the other side. It's larger than life-size.

It's what stood around the altars of the churches in the Middle Ages, and the other side is the resurrection, where you see Jesus on one side with his jaw agape and head falling, and the other side is the most glorious son of God breaking forth in glory, and where every perforation and wound, beams of glory are pouring out. So you've got the resurrection side because you're willing to bear the death and the suffering side, and you only have the one side as you have the other. We have shallow views of resurrection because we have shallow views of suffering and death.

That's why we don't have resurrection hope, resurrection faith, resurrection power, because we lack the death that precedes it, both in our own experience and our unwillingness to see it in him. We have prettified the cross, we've decorated it, we've robbed it of its horror, but in that horror is a revelation that is not given in any other place, and that's why the key to the sending of Moses as Israel's deliverer was the turning aside to see the burning bush. Remember that? God saw that he turned aside to see.

Why was that so important to God? Was there an option? Evidently there was. He was a free agent. He could have played his cards right and said, this is fishy.

I'm getting bad vibes about this. I don't know what this means, but I think I'll just pass this on by. I've got enough surahs.

I've got enough to occupy me. If I look into this, who knows what that looking will imply. And I quote the rabbis that say, the reason that God's so honored with turning aside is because they realize that once you turn aside to see, there's no assurance you'll ever turn back again.

You've done something of a decisive kind, and even though what you saw before may have been correct, you'll not be able to go back to it as you knew it. You may have to start from scratch and go right through your whole Christian faith all over again, and what in fact you do believe. That turning aside to see that one thing must affect all of your other categories, and God waits for that.

Only those who turn aside are candidates for sending, and sending is what the word apostolic means. And except you're sent, you cannot confront Satan, the Pharaoh. You may deal with an individual Egyptian, but you cannot deal with the source of the evil, except you're a sent one.

And sending waits on the turning aside to see, that's the Holy Grail. And we have to say that not only has the Jewish community failed to turn aside to see what the holocaust of the extermination of Jew has meant, but they even give alternative interpretations. The failure of the church, the anti-semitic content of the New Testament, the failure of Christianity.

After all, this took place in Christian Germany. By the way, do you know that almost every Nazi ideologue, that is to say those who are responsible for the Nazi ideology, were the disillusioned sons of Protestant ministers? I have a remarkable book on Nazism and the occult, and the writer makes it clear and gives the case histories. One after another are the sons that of former pastors were themselves having come out of a faint and inadequate Protestantism, from which they were disillusioned, and it never spoke to their whole heart, and they were looking for something intensive, and they found it in paganism and occultism and violence.

See how costly it is to have the shallow faith? The heart of the faith is the cross of Christ Jesus. So I looked again tonight at some classic statements like T. Austin Sparks, the centrality, the universality of the cross, that it has to do with God's eternal purpose. It represents the tremendous significance of Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man.

The latter set forth the terrible and glorious meaning of Jesus Christ and him crucified, in other words, the cross. He calls it the all-comprehending, all-explaining center of the universe. It is the hub of the wheel.

You will never get outside of the range of the cross. It is the hub of all, the truth, the basis, the issue, the explanation of everything. In fact, we talked about unity on Tuesday night, about Ephesians and chapter one, that we might be one.

No way outside the cross. The issue of being one is the issue of the cross. That's how much it's the hub.

There's no issue of the faith that does not have this as its center. So to miss this is to miss everything, and that's why we have ecumenical things seeking for a unity that circumvents the cross and tries to find it on some other basis. God gave us a lesson.

He made a statement. God, consulting his own wisdom, was to say, what one thing can I do in intervening in the affairs of men, in coming into time and history, to make such a statement as would be valid through every subsequent generation and would give the key and the clue to myself, my way, to what I am and what I call my people to be. What one thing would I do is what he did.

Christ crucified. The inability to discern the meaning of the value of the cross is a problem still. We don't even understand the triune God, except that we find that revelation at the cross, and Jews have condemned themselves to a monotheistic view of God, which is not a correct view.

You say, big deal, what's the difference? It's not God. God is God in triunity, and that's why he calls us to that same condition in our life, because nothing else reveals him. They will know that the Father has sent them when they see that you are one, that the revelation of God is in the coming together of persons in a certain bond of authentic relationship as is true of God himself in the Godhead.

But if you don't see God in three persons, you lose that whole meaning. You lose God. And in fact, I go on in the paper to say that because Jews clung to a monotheistic view to this day, in the face of the revelation of God in three persons at the cross, and we'll come back to that to say, how is that a revelation of God in three persons? I believe that it gave birth to Mohammedanism, to Islam.

Islam is a sect. It's a deviant Judaism. Islam is the conjunction of a deviant, of an inadequate Judaism, and a backslidden and corrupt Christianity that rests on a monotheistic view of God, which is not God.

And that's why it can be ruthless and violent in its expression, because it does not know him as a God who would never defer to violence in the attainment of his ends, and yet is full of powerful, deceptive, religious zeal unto death. And what is the greatest threat to Israel today is Islamic terrorism, that is the outgrowth of a sect that should never have had its inception if the Jewish community had received the revelation of God at the cross at 33 AD. It took seven centuries for the outworking of the era to find its expression in Islam, and took 13 centuries to come to haunt them now to the point of the threat of their very existence.

But however long God's judgments are deferred, they will inevitably fall. And one of the themes that I take up in this paper, we'll come back to it, is the time sequence, that though there is a delay, as for example, Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 32, God says it will come to you in the latter days. And when God says it will come, it will come.

And where it says in Deuteronomy 32, one will turn a thousand to flight and two ten thousand, exactly what happened in the Nazi time. As we discussed over this table, that when the film Shoah was made, and they're interviewing a survivor from Greece, a Jew, who said, yes, at the early morning hours we were required to meet by the train station in a Greek city, and we were loaded in cattle cars and taken, and then by boats we crossed the Aegean Straits, and we came into Europe, and then by train to Auschwitz, the man said, well, how many were you in that boat that was going across? And he said, oh, we were two or three hundred. And how many stood God over you? Two.

Well, why didn't you just rise up and overwhelm them? And the guy went, huh? It was just not in them, because their rock had deserted them, and one could put a thousand to flight and two ten thousand, in fulfillment of God's word, however long deferred. Now, isn't this instructional for the Church, and sobering for the Church? And how much deeper would we be in the knowledge of the Lord and of his way, and in our walk, if these things had sunk into our hearing? Well, this is another precious book. This is a classic.

You can sympathize with a man, but what shall you say for a God who allows himself to suffer at the hands of men, so unspeakable a torment and an indignity? The crucified God. At the moment I saw the title, I said, I'm not leaving this house without that book. If I have to step over that man's body, this book is going with me, and this is the book.

It went with me. Nothing would dissuade me. It's available, I think, this is Harper and Row, probably out of print, but a new edition is available by the Lutheran Publishing House.

What is it called? Fortress Press. All of Moltmann's works, and he's gone on now to write many, he himself came to the faith out of his own concentration camp experience, not as a Jew, but as a prisoner of war as a German, and then enrolled in a seminary, and he said, no theologian or professor who could speak to us could obtain our attention unless he could speak to us of a God who suffers. We had come out of suffering, and we would not consider any view of God, that of a God who somehow circumvented suffering, but when the crucified God was set forth at the cross, that's the faith into which we were taken.

The great tragedy is, if German theology had been taken into that faith long before Hitler, there would not have been a Hitler. Hitler is the product of the vacuum of the want of this kind of perception of the faith. So, I want to read you some of the gems.

The substance or the character of one's whole life is revealed in their manner or their moment of dying. What did that centurion say who stood at the foot of the cross and watched Jesus die, who was a professional executor, had seen many men crucified, had done it himself, was hardened, a man of blood, but he saw something in the death and suffering of Jesus that forced a statement out of him that was his salvation, for which he had no biblical training, no preparation, that the Jewish community was unable to acknowledge. He had this statement burst out of him.

This, truly, this is the Son of God. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. To see the Son of God, that the genius of what that means, that probably lay beyond his ability to analyze it, was salvational.

When I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto myself. Just as sinners, when they saw the brass serpent lifted up, were saved by the seeing, something is worked salvationally by the seeing of Jesus crucified, because his revelation in his suffering and his death was unlike that of any other man. How one dies reveals who one is, or what one is, because dying is extremity, dying is crisis, dying is ultimate moment, ultimate suffering, and ultimate suffering reveals ultimately.

That's why there's a whole joke about this Russian school of acting, where they would say, I want to suffer, because they know they would never be real actors. They would be the American phonies, the cheapies with the toothy grins and Tom Cruise and all of those jerks, who don't know beans, because they've never suffered. I mean, you can see right there, cellophane, there's nothing, there's no substance.

There's something about the nature of suffering that is ultimately revealing, particularly when it's righteous suffering and not the suffering which is the consequence of your own stupidity and sin. And when a righteous man who never sinned will suffer the sin of the stupidity and grossness of all mankind and take it upon himself and bear that nobly and magnanimously, while he's even being taunted by his own people in the moment of bearing it, that has got to be an ultimate revelation of not who just Jesus is, but who God is, who will bear that and suffer that for men. You want to know what God is? See what he bore on the cross.

If you don't know that, you don't know God. And if you don't know God like that, how shall you be like him? And that's why we have papier-mâché saints and cardboard cut-outs and sanctified pretty little things, you know, that you look at them cross-eyed and boom, they're gone, because they don't know as they ought to know in the one place where the knowing was provided, at the cross of Christ Jesus. So, ultimate suffering reveals ultimate reality.

I would almost say it makes ultimate reality possible. So, what does Jürgen Moltmann write? This death itself expresses God. The death of Jesus is a statement of God about himself.

I mean, he chose it, of all the ways in which he could have revealed himself, in ways in which Judaism would have preferred an honorific God, noble, spiritual, who doesn't get himself dirty. That's not the way God revealed himself. He not only got himself dirty, he got himself battered more than any man.

He suffered the worst of human indignities as God. And you know why Jews would have a difficulty conceiving that as being God? It's not in keeping with their religious view and what they hold to be the dignity of God. And that's why I've heard rabbis say, you talk about the Lord when he talks to you? Come on.

God is distant. He's a higher power. He's an impersonal force in the universe.

Oh, how sweet for you. How lovely that sounds. Why, that sounds so God-honoring when it's actually blasphemous and it's a lie.

How come you prefer God so distant and so noble, and not where you are fornicating behind the scenes and taking your liberties? Because you don't want God there. You want him distant and noble and elevated and remote. But what is God saying at the cross? I'm in the middle of your fornications.

There's nothing. You can batter your wife. You can torment children.

You can victimize children. You can enter into the most perverse, rotten, filthy, and scummy things of which man is capable. I'm in that.

I have wallowed in your sin. I have won the full weight of that. You don't have to be pretty for me.

I didn't call you because you were pretty. I'm not trying to make you pretty. I'm trying to transform you and impart my nature.

But don't romanticize me. Don't idealize me. Because your view that you present a project of is the view that serves yourself.

It keeps you in the nice view that you have of yourself. You don't want to see the horror that I bore, because you don't want to see the horror that you are. Why? It might get you in trouble with the Jewish community.

As impressed as they are with your philanthropies and your many generousities and you've endowed the synagogue and you've given \$100,000 to the Israel Fund, and what a great sport you are, but to see yourself as being a sinner who required this brutal death, and that can never be made up by 10 million such contributions to Israel, and that it required this, is another kind of seeing. So, God chose to reveal himself that way, because that way is God's statement about himself. So, who is God? The one who lets Jesus die, or at the same time the Jesus who dies.

It's a revelation of the inner mystery in God himself, in this death of Jesus, and the fullness of the Trinitarian relationships of God himself. So, who has a handle on this? In what way is Christ crucified? Maybe this is why Paul said, I refuse to know anything but Christ and him crucified. Is that the revelation of the Triune God? I don't want to even go into why this is important, but I will say this.

The number of Christians who subscribe to the correctness of the Triune God don't live by that view. They are monotheistic in their actual mentalities. I gave a message in San Antonio, Texas on church government, and I said to those who wanted a single pastor, I said, you have a monotheistic view of the church, because a view of the church government as being a plurality of equals, of elders, of equality, is a Triune view, more in keeping with your view of God.

The view of a single man as pastor, professional, is more in keeping with a monotheistic view. So, that's only one instance of how our view of God affects many things. God is Triune Saints, and how is that revealed at the cross? More than in any other place.

So much to say that if you miss that revelation, you miss God as God, and you're stuck with your monotheistic view that is going to influence your birth to a sect called Islam, and it's going to come back to haunt you centuries later, and threaten your very life away cruelly. That's how expensive it is to miss this.

Remember the prayer in the garden? Father, if this can pass, nevertheless, not my will, but thy will, showing the submittedness of the son to the father.

Is that important for us, practically speaking, as believers? Can there be church without that, that is in any way the church? Can there be a body without the parts rightly related because of a submittedness and a deference of one to another? If we don't see that in God, in himself exhibiting that at great cost to himself unto unspeakable sufferings and death, how shall we? Because submission is painful. Self-will is the way that the flesh wants to go. Independence, but to submit and to go under, is costly.

And will we do it, really, with a true heart and a clear heart, if we've not seen the revelation of the Son who did it? I don't want to be practical and speak of instances, but this is at the heart of more problems than we know. The failure to see this so affects our practical conduct. To have your heart broken by the son's submittedness to the father.

And what is the posture toward the son from the father in the midst of the son's suffering? And now I'm asking, I'm bringing the other person of the Godhead, the father. How does the father, how is he revealed at this time? How does he deport himself toward the son in the midst of the son's suffering? My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Is the ridicule that is often seized upon by unbelievers, especially among my kinsmen, to say, well look, how could God be talking to God? And where is the God who turns away from the suffering God? Why hast thou forsaken me? Come on, you guys, you've got to use this. What does that reveal? Why the turning away? Why the cry of Jesus out of Psalm 22, is it? What is being revealed here? What is caught in that moment that opens God for ridicule? So horrendous, so unbelievably ugly, so contrary to a God who is holy, that while his son had to bear it, he himself had to turn from him.

That maybe the greatest suffering of Jesus was not the physical suffering or the moral suffering, but the sense of the absence of God in the midst of suffering. Does that mean that God was indifferent, the father was indifferent, or not, or indeed not even present, if in all of our afflictions he's afflicted. And yet Jesus had to experience the forsakenness of God as being part of the whole enormous saga of what crucifixion and death is.

Do you think any of us will ever have to taste that? And will you be encouraged that in your crisis and your crucifixion, in whatever form it will come, that God will be of all, ironically, least present, that you can bear it because his son bore it, and you don't require an explanation. That even in the absence of a felt presence, God is there nevertheless. If you can believe for blessings in heavenly places while you're experiencing them, you can believe for God being with you, though I'm with you always, I will never leave you nor forsake you, in the midst of the feeling of forsakenness.

It's at the heart of what it means to be a son of God. Because not every spiritual person can bear that or is willing for that, but a son will. But it has to do with the deepest seasoning of character formation that makes a son a son.

If there were not three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we would have no model for sonship. How is the Holy Spirit manifest? That Jesus gave himself without spot by the eternal Spirit unto God at the cross. What's the significance of that beside the fact that the Spirit is active? In other words, it was not human heroism.

It was not his humanity that explains his giving himself up without spot unto the Father by the eternal Spirit. It's another power. It's another force.

It's another enablement. Does that encourage you? Or would you be more encouraged if Jesus had given himself in sacrifice by his virtue as a man in his humanity of sacrifice, which men have done? There have been many martyrs, even for secular causes. Communists and socialists who have gone to jail and been killed and shot and tortured.

I mean, there are men that are being tortured in Israeli prisons now for their cause. But God did not allow Jesus to perform the central act on the basis of his own precious humanity. He had to do it by or through the eternal Spirit.

And I'm saying this is dynamite, not only theoretically because it concludes and reveals all free persons, but what is its practical meaning and significance for us as we face the cross in these last days? On what basis are we required to face the cross of sacrifice by the eternal Spirit and not sucking your lips and gritting your teeth and taking a deep breath? Would God insist on that? That's critical in the revelation of God. And the powers of darkness hate it. Had they known they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory, if all this was caught up in that one act, why do they hate it? Because every cruciform act that follows in relationship, in fellowship, in submission, in teaching and in preaching, in ministry and in service, in prayer and supplication and intercession that goes forth by the eternal Spirit is a reiteration of God himself and not man.

Can you see that? The powers of darkness are not afraid of man. They're afraid of God. And when any act is performed by the Spirit, it's a revelation of God.

It's not just a technical enablement. That's why Paul said, I refuse to come to you on the basis of human eloquence and erudition and intellect and learning, though I'm capable of all those things. I count that as done.

I preach Christ and him crucified. I speak the foolishness of Christ. I come in weakness.

When I came into this room tonight, Inez said to me, are you sick? I must have looked it. I said, well, I don't think I'm sick, but I'm certainly weak, very, very weak. I'm not feeling that weakness now, but I believe that the strength that is coming now and the conviction and the hammer blows and the solid statements to break in is not out of my humanity.

It is by the eternal Spirit. But what makes that Spirit possible? It's a man dying to his ability to perform something out of his humanity. That's what releases and enables the eternal Spirit to find expression.

And that's what Jesus demonstrated in his obedience and submission, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Why would you say in Hebrews 9, in all the ways in which the Spirit can be described, it's called the eternal Spirit? Why not the Holy Spirit? It's the same Spirit. There's only one Spirit of God.

Why the eternal Spirit?

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