

K-513 Theology of Exile (1 of 2)

by Art Katz

Art Katz's sermon discusses the theology of exile, emphasizing its historical significance and the urgent need for prophetic warnings about future judgments.

Duration: 57:06

Scripture: Genesis 6:13, Isaiah 26:20

Topics: "Exile"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the topic of exile and the impending catastrophe that he believes will come upon the earth. He emphasizes the importance of sounding a warning to both the church and the Jewish community about this future disaster. The speaker mentions a paper he has written on the subject, inspired by a book called 'A Theology of Exile' by Thomas Rate. He expresses his surprise that while these theologians discuss the significance of exile in Israel's history, they do not explicitly warn about the future catastrophe.

Transcript

I want to start this morning with reviewing a paper that I've written on the subject of exile entitled, Thinking the Unthinkable, because I'm expecting horrendous things to break upon the earth that will be unthinkable, both for those who will be victim of it and for the church itself. And one of the privileges of the school is to employ papers that have been written. I'd like to encourage you to write papers.

It's a wonderful exercise and let the Lord ignite a theme or a topic and put it in print. So I like this interaction over these papers and maybe one day, if it should please the Lord, they'll find themselves in a book. In fact, I have a burden to put out a book with a title of something like, The Coming Catastrophe of Israel and send it out as a word of warning to an unsuspecting Jewish community and for the church also.

And it should such a book come to pass, it will employ articles of this kind. That the writers on the subject of exile are remarkably liberal theologians, Protestant theologians, Lutheran theologians, men whose view about even scripture itself would be at odds with us. And yet their scholarly application, their examination of those scriptures is rewarding and provocative.

So this paper was inspired by a book called A Theology of Exile by Thomas Raitt and published by Fortress Press, which is a Lutheran publishing company. In all of the books that I've read, and there are not many, but they have this strange thing in common. As acute as these writers are in showing the

significance of exile and the experience of exile in the history of Israel and showing even unfulfilled prophecies that pertain to future exile, they never make clear that there's a future catastrophe coming for which the church and world Jewry ought to be alerted.

I can't fathom that. I'm waiting for the next page where the man is just going to come right out and say, well, look, if this is clearly not yet fulfilled and it has such prospect of sober things, ought not there be a warning to be sounded? But nothing like that. Maybe that's when you're writing something academic, you allow the implications to be drawn by the reader himself and you don't state them.

Maybe that's the difference between a scholar and a prophet. My prophetic heart wants to cry out a warning. And that's really the object of our concern.

We're not just sifting through something academically, but a word that needs to be sounded in the hearing of the unwary and the unsuspecting. And of course, at the same time, if they can be convinced that there's a disaster coming to encourage them to find a place of safety, even now in the ark of God, who is the Lord himself. So we've used the word exile from the beginning of this week, but does everybody have a clear view of what that means? Not just in your mind, but in your heart and in your emotions, do you understand the devastation of what unsuspecting calamity means when it comes to a people and uproots them from their city and from their land? That the enormous suffering, what does it say that the blood was up to the bridle of the horses, that when Rome came to put down the uprisings of the Jews in 70 AD, and then later on under Bar Kochba about 135 AD, who was thought to be a Messiah, that the bloodshed was horrific.

Everybody knows about Masada and the final suicide of the last defenders of that great fortress in the Judean wilderness, where men slit the throats of their children and their wives, and then took their own lives. That when the Romans broke in on that following morning, all they found were a sea of corpses. Only two or three survivors, an old woman and two children, hid themselves.

Everyone else perished. This is an unspeakable catastrophe. Maybe we can understand when Jesus, on his way to the cross, looked out on Jerusalem and wept and said, O Jerusalem, O Jerusalem, how oft would I have taken you under my wings as a hen does her chicks, but you would not.

And now you have missed the day of your visitation. Because the Lord saw not only the catastrophe that would fall, which he predicted prophetically, not one stone would be left standing on the temple in which you boasted, but he saw that would have set in motion a train of tragedy, going to follow the Jews even into the exilic places, into the lands where they would be cast, where at night they would wish it were day and at day they would wish it were night. The whole history of bloodshed and bloodlettings, virtually in every hamlet and town and city in Germany, particularly during the Passover season, Passover Easter, forced conversions, mass suicides in synagogues.

The city that was my favorite in all of Germany near Stuttgart, where I was stationed as a GI, Esslingen, I found out after my return from Germany, just in an accidental coming upon an encyclopedia, that the entire Jewish community was wiped out during the Crusades. When the knights on the way to the Holy Land would victimize and pillage Jewish communities to obtain, loot them to finance their journey, and that the Jewish community of Esslingen had locked itself up in its own synagogue, and that the synagogue was put to the torch and the entire community went up in flames. And in Esslingen today, there's not so much as a plaque, a tablet, any kind of public commemoration of that tragedy.

In fact, the historic cathedral of Esslingen, built in the 1400s, is supposed to have been erected over the site where the synagogue itself had existed. So, you need to read the book by Michael Brown, *Our Hands Are Filled With Blood*, which is the first popular treatment of the history of persecution and suffering of Jews at the hands of so-called Christians. But it's a tragedy that was set in motion by the rejection of Jesus and the judgments of God that fell, that required their exile and their expulsion, which is a fascinating and rich study of how people react to crises of this magnitude and God's place in it and his purposes in it, the redemptive purposes.

It would be a study in itself, but when we know that there's a future such devastation coming, yet another exilic being thrust out again into the nations, then this study is not really academic or abstract, it's pointed at particular. So, I just want to breathe a little prayer. I think this is the first time that I've had opportunity to just share this in a setting like this and to interact over this paper.

So, Lord, we ask the blessing of your spirit, that your heart, my God, that is in this, that has witnessed these scenes, that as it says in your word, that in all of their afflictions, you were afflicted. You were not some passive spectator. You suffered the pangs and the horror of the devastation of your own people brought on by their own iniquity and sin.

And you warned them and you sent prophets raising them up early and they refused to hear them. And finally, my God, when their cup of iniquity was filled, these judgments fell. And men who thought that such a thing would be impossible, that to be cast out of the land or to see Jerusalem destroyed or the temple destroyed was unthinkable.

The unthinkable took place. And Lord, we suspect that there are unthinkable things that are future and that are now brooding and being prepared. And so we ask that you would help us to think about the things that from which the mind even recoils and to gain an understanding and to be fitted and prepared, my God, to sound the warning and to instruct the church and as many of the people of Israel, my God, whose deaf ears you will open, that they might be saved from the horror of what is yet future.

So, since that you put the subject of exile on my heart, Lord, I ask now a grace for us all as we probe and feel our way through this paper. Thank you. Thank you for that privilege, Lord, in Jesus' name.

Amen. In the book that I had yesterday, *Israel in Exile* by Ralph Klein, again, the same publisher, Fortress Press. It's interesting how this Lutheran publishing house puts out all this good stuff.

None of the charismatic publishing houses ever touched these things, which is a thought in passing. Klein writes, exile meant death, deportation, destruction, and devastation, not only of a physical kind, but of a moral and a spiritual kind. It's a good question to raise whether the moral and spiritual death is yet even more painful and has lasting implications beyond even the physical suffering.

For example, the Jewish attitude toward Germany, the vehemence and the bitterness toward Germany that yet remains 50 years after the Holocaust is, in my opinion, not only a statement about what was suffered physically at the hands of the Nazis, but the bitter disappointment in the failure of German civilization, which had become such a hope to enlightened Jews right up until the time of Hitler, that somehow Germany has never been forgiven for being a failed ideal. If you would know it so well as I know it, or even begin to know it as God knows it, that secular German Jews, which is, by the way, was the epitome of celebrated Jewishness to be a German Jew, was to be a privileged Jew. The Polish Jew, the Jews that came out of the ghettos, the shtetls, the little villages like *Fiddler on the Roof* were looked upon

with a kind of disdain and contempt.

But the German Jew, the breadth of his culture, his intelligence, his place in society, in German society, was the epitome and the hype. And this people looked upon German civilization as even being the messianic hope for the world. So taken up were they with that impressive civilization.

And I can tell you that just to move about in Germany today, which is a shadow of its former greatness, is still to be impressed. There's something about Germany, the beauty of the land, the country itself, its culture, the depth, its history, its minds, even theology today. The greatest theology is German theology.

There's something about the German mentality that is able, that has the stamina to work its way through complex questions. They're footnotings. I've always had great respect, how exhausting, and they'll cite every source on that subject and then there'll be an explanation in the footnote of their particular difference with that writer.

The breadth of their scholarship, German scholarship, fastidious attention to detail, German theology and theologians are renowned the world over. And this is what Jews celebrated, not so much the theology as the breadth of culture, the premium put upon ethics, morality, philosophy had become for them a substitute for God himself. So it's no accident that their devastation came at German hands, that the thing in which they trusted became the source of their death.

And not only a death, but a bestial death, a devastating death, a cruel death, a pitiless, merciless death that the German civilization reputed for its culture and its ethics brought upon Israel in the Holocaust, such conditions that you would not even visit on animals. And that somehow this is not accidental, but an outworking of something which shows the wisdom of God in judgment. God judged and made a rod of judgment the very thing that backslidden Israel had celebrated above God.

So it makes you fear then what is the future yet of this people if the scripture says that that which is to come eclipses any previous suffering that Jewry has ever known, that this time of tribulation that is coming is of such a kind that if God did not cut it short, that no flesh would survive, and that it's the worst that has ever been known or ever will be known in the history of this people, and that's yet future. So what ought the church to understand about that if it is to sound a warning and to be some kind of voice that might save people out of that devastation? The temple and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. was a tangible symbol of the people's election and the reminder of God's unfailing actions in history on their behalf. Now enemies had raced through the sanctuary in which foreigners were not even to be present.

If you ever read the descriptions in Josephus of the fall of Jerusalem, how the last defense was on the very roof of the temple and that the building was put to the torch and men would just burn to a crisp on a building that they thought was unassailable and inviolable. I'm going to use that word again, or unviolable from the word violation. In other words, cannot be violated.

One thing we could be assured that whatever may happen, God is not going to allow his own city to be destroyed or his own temple. That was their belief, that conviction, and yet they died in the burning ruins of it. And you don't recover from that.

The memory of that colossal devastation remains, and in fact there's a sense in which it ought to remain. On this last overseas trip, I sat for about two hours with the leader of the Jewish community of Nuremberg, a very precious man. I've been in correspondence with him, but this is the first time that we met and had

an opportunity to sit down face-to-face over the table in his office.

And he had done his homework, and I had written some scriptures for him, and he had searched them out and he had a contrary explanation for every scripture. But I had to say, you're among one of the rare Jews that I've ever met, who at least, even though your treatment of the scripture is horrific, at least you base your arguments on scripture. However wrongly they're being interpreted, and that much I appreciate it.

But we came to a point in our conversation where it was clear that he had no understanding of exile or exodus or the diaspora. Do you know that word? D-I-A-S-P-O-R-A. The expulsion into the nations as being the statement of God's judgment.

So I had to say to him, how is it that you were born in Nuremberg? How is it I was born in Brooklyn? How is it that the Jews who are born in Moscow and in all places in the world outside of the land? It never occurred to him that there's a conjunction between those places of birth and the fact that it's a statement of God's judgment through exile and expulsion. So it's something that needs to be made known. And we can pray that something was brought to his consciousness that day that he needs to consider.

We've done so well in exile that we don't even see it as the place of our judgment. Brooklyn is to us more natural than Judea. In fact, thinking of Judea seems to us alien and strange when you've been brought up in asphalt and brick and played ball in the streets and in the open lots.

It's your life. And so what have we got to do with that remote location and that remote people? So we move from our experience and from our understanding. So much at home in Brooklyn and so much making our success there.

Even the names that we've mentioned today in prayer, Steven Spielberg, and I keep forgetting the name of that film, Woody Allen, a New Yorker, Bob Dylan, and all of the men who have succeeded in exile. So it has removed from us the consideration that the place of our success is the place of our judgment and our shame. We should never have been there to begin with.

And of course, God's redemptive history ends by returning the remnant of his people to the place that was intended for them from the first when they shall be restored. Lots of questions are set in motion by the judgment that results in exile. If the temple is destroyed and the priesthood is dispersed, how do you perform sacrifice? What do you do with your historical and biblical faith? How do you atone for sin? And Judaism was faced with enormous questions and the way in which those questions were answered have everything to do with the present condition of world Jewry.

Woody Allen and men like that who have been alienated from Judaism, as I myself was, though I was bar mitzvahed at the age of 13, I did my thing. I gratified my mother who felt she had an obligation that her son should have a Jewish quote education, which never had a cotton picking thing to do with God. The education was really a preparation for one ceremony.

So I can understand how men like Woody Allen would be repulsed by that exposure and have no answer for the dilemma of their life and have to seek it intellectually in ideologies, philosophies, and occultic things and other alternatives. Judaism has been largely a dead end for modern Jews, although it is experiencing a bit of revival now, but that what we call Judaism was the response of the Pharisaic leaders who were instrumental in the death of Jesus and the persecution of the apostolic church to find an answer of how to continue in business in the absence of a temple and a priesthood. And so what they devised, this

rabbinical Judaism, is the alternative to the kind of practice that God required biblically that had at its heart both a temple and a priesthood, both of which were lost in the judgments of God that came in 70 AD, and for which the Jewish community has suffered ever since.

Of course, if we had some orthodox Jews here, they would wildly dispute everything that I'm saying and commend rabbinical Judaism as a blessing and what they call Torah and Talmudic study and so on, but I'm giving you my perspective, which I believe is true, of course. So what hope for the future is there when God has allowed your dearest and cherished things to be destroyed? What's your understanding of God? And this writer says, what kind of future was possible for people who had so alienated their God that rejection was his necessary response? Okay, now into my paper, and I wrote this before, the thing that I've just read you, and my paper begins with this statement, what can reasonably be expected from a God of providence and the view of his people when they are shattered, when ultimate catastrophe breaks? Exile is an unthinkable experience and has everything to do with how God is to be viewed in the future, what kind of a faith can be had after that? You need to understand the great loss of faith after the Holocaust. One of the great books that has come out by a Jewish writer is called *After Auschwitz*, where a previously orthodox Jew now contends that there's no basis for belief in God after the Holocaust, that there might be some value in religious practices to bring some kind of a moral value to Jewish life, but belief in God is totally untenable after Auschwitz.

Where was God in the devastation? How did he allow it? And I don't believe that Jews have recovered from that devastation. They have no answer for it, though there is answer, but it's an answer that they've not been able to consider, namely that the judgments are the consequence of our sins, and historically that was always understood in everything that Israel suffered, and it's in the prophets, and God makes it clear that our judgments are an exact proportion to our sins. Why then wasn't that a sufficient answer for the Holocaust? Because the magnitude of the Holocaust, the systematic annihilation of six million Jews was a horror of such a kind that it eclipsed even the ability to explain it on the basis of Jewish sin.

There was no consciousness of sin on the part of world Jewry, and so they could not equate their suffering with their condition, but what they did not understand, and even the church doesn't understand, is that though God may withhold judgment and suspend it for a long period of time, there comes an hour when it's released, but it's an answer and a statement to sins of a cumulative kind that may have gone back for many generations and now have their final outworking as the catastrophe of the Holocaust. So this brings up all kinds of questions. Are present-day Jews culpable and liable for the sins of their fathers? Can a righteous God bring a judgment upon the sins of the fathers that are experienced by the generation that came so much later? What's the connection between the fathers and the present generation? How does God view that? Is his view different than ours? Is a nation responsible corporately for the sins of its fathers? What about individual responsibility? How could God judge the innocent? How about the million and a half children who died in the Holocaust? These are great questions, and they need to be examined, and they need to be asked, because I believe that in the asking of them, God waits to be found.

It's something like the God of the burning bush. He's waiting to see who will turn aside, as Moses did, to look into that bush, which is one of the most painful things to consider. So the man that I'm reading, Thomas Raitt, *Theology of Exile*, writes, one can hardly exaggerate the challenge to Israel's faith posed by the collapse of the national state and the removal of its survivors through captivity in a land hundreds of miles away.

When you hear this, think of this. He's talking about the exile and expulsion that came from the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. What would it mean if it would have come now? What if this present peace negotiation finally collapses on its face, and the disappointed Palestinians, coupled with surrounding Arab nations that have always desired Israel's expulsion into the sea, finally, though they have not succeeded in past efforts, succeed now? What if there is a horrendous defeat of Israel, and a failure of Israel as a state, and an expulsion again into the nations? So when you hear his statement about Israel's past, think of it as the possibility of Israel's future.

And that, as I say somewhere else in this paper, there's something about modernity that makes these things utterly unthinkable. What made the Holocaust such a trauma is not only the number of deaths, but that it took place in the 20th century, in the age of enlightenment and progress. That's what was, you know, if it happened in the Middle Ages, okay.

You know, the dark ages. But when devastation comes in modern times, by the most celebrated civilization of all, that heightens the anguish of the moral pain of what is experienced. So having suffered the Holocaust, and the expression that was born of it, never again, and the rise of a state that has become the third greatest military power on earth, with nuclear capability, and high-tech civilization, for another devastation to come, and the destruction of this state, and this hope, and another expulsion again into the nations, who, by the way, are not going to be all that gung-ho to receive them.

What will the effect of that be, should it happen again? The effect for the Jewish community, the effect on the nations, the effect on the church, this is calamity with a capital C, and will set in motion such things as will conclude the age, because that has been lost now to present Jewish consciousness. It's in the history book, but it doesn't have an emotional meaning, all the more because they're secular, and what does the temple mean to them, or temple practices, or sacrifice? Modern rabbis today are embarrassed that Judaism ever performed sacrifice, and they'll tell you, quite frankly, that that was primitive Judaism. They're embarrassed by those references, so even the destruction of the temple predicated on sacrificing by priests is nothing that's dear to their hearts, but present Israel as a state is dear to their hearts, and it's not only a hope for those living in the state, it's a hope for Jews that are in the nations, who maybe have no intention of going, but somehow it brings them a sense of security that the very existence of the state is a backup in case anything goes wrong, I've got a place to go, but what happens if that place is removed, and you have no place to go, at the same time where anti-Semitism is being stepped up in the nation where you are, and your existence there has become questionable? It's God moving world Jewry to a final crisis, and I believe that we're going to see those things.

It would offend modern Jews even to think that there could be any connection between the sins of the past and the present generation, because they're groomed in a modern view of responsibility, which is not biblical. God's thoughts are not our thoughts, but God judges on the basis not of modern man's views, but his views. So part of the prophetic task is to bring modern men back or into God's view of things, because it's on that basis that eternal judgment is going to be rendered.

But you're going to be an anachronism. You're going to be some freako who has a view of things totally out of keeping with the way in which they are seen today by modern men. That's why I raised the word about modernity, and in fact let's go on on this.

This is going to be the foundational basis of the attack against the church by the liberal unbelieving community, the Clinton gang, the people that share that modernist mentality, look with increasing disfavor

upon fundamentalists, the evangelical fundamentalists, and their subscription to views that are out of keeping with the temper of modern times. And that's why they've gotten the Ten Commandments out of the classroom, and prayer, and all of these things which are virtually harmless in themselves, but they can't even abide that much. They despise the biblical view, and we're going to be the square peg in a round hole.

We are not going to fit. We're going to become increasingly conspicuous and out of tune with the age, until finally I believe that our elimination will be called for. We will be obstructions to ecumenical union and progressive progress because we insist on biblical terms, and we're not looking to men to find an answer to their predicaments through a confederation of nations and an antichrist system, but we're looking for the coming of the Lord.

Oh, this is so deep. You need to read back two newsletters of ours where I make mention of the Waco catastrophe, and I raise the question about the vindictive devastation that came to that little sect. Weirdo and true, but far out of proportion to any threat that they could have constituted.

But you know what I believe was the heart of the offense to governmental agencies was their apocalyptic expectancy about the end of the age of a kingdom that would come from God and not from men, that they would not subscribe to the kingdoms of this world and to government. It was an attack against the principalities and powers of the air that is invested in nations and in this nation, and in the Waco disaster, we have a little preview of things to come, and I raised the question in my article in the newsletter, who's next and how discriminating can government officials be to distinguish between weirdo sects that are apocalyptic in character and authentic expressions of the body of Christ, which we believe ourselves to be, who are also apocalyptic in our expectation and look for another king and another kingdom to come. Will we be equally as blotted out and considered as much threat by secular government officials who don't even know which end is up and who are moved upon by the powers of darkness whose instrumentalities they are? Oh, I can go on in this.

Right here in Bemidji, a man was arrested at gunpoint. I understand I may not have the exact figures, something like 30 FBI agents apprehended him in the parking lot of Perkins Restaurant. The man was absolutely harmless.

I didn't know him well, but I had met him. He attended a little seminar that we once put on. He was a learned man in scripture.

He had a view that the income tax is unconstitutional. For all I know, his view may well be right, and that it was hoisted and perpetrated on a nation at a certain crisis time in and around World War I, but that it is basically unconstitutional. He was encouraging tax protesters, but what he's really striking at is the efficacy and the entity of the IRS as a government within government and a power unto itself.

The reaction was so many times exaggerated as against the threat that he represented. That man is presently in a 65-year sentence, whereas men who have committed murder, rape, pillage, I mean the most horrendous crimes, get off after three months, three years, they're on probation. Look at Jimmy Baker.

I mean, he's not my favorite, but they threw the book at him. Forty-five years, originally. Yeah, which shows the vindictiveness and the hatred of the liberal secular community against anything that is in any way related to that which is evangelical and fundamental.

So, you hold biblical views, you're going to find yourself in opposition to another mindset, and you're going to be looked upon as dangerous. And I think the disparity between apostolic Christians or an apostolic church and the world is going to be more and more visible and uncomfortable. The verse that nails that down is the one that says, and they will kill us and claim that they are doing God a service, that our removal is necessary for world peace, unity, and progress.

That's how much we will be an impediment in the works, if you take these kinds of views. So, here again I'm saying, it's the issue of Israel, the issue of exile, the issue of judgment that brings us into an examination of the things of God and of God himself, particularly in judgment, that nothing else will afford us, and that opens up a view of God that the church desperately needs, that has everything to do in explaining the lightness that is in the church, the frivolity, the casual air, the absence of God's fear, which disfigures the church and makes it something less than other than God intended. That's why I keep coming back again, the issue of Israel in the last analysis, but the issue of the church, what we have paid by absenting or removing these things from our consideration is visible before us today in the unhappy condition of the church.

And therefore, what is the witness of that church to its own community and to the world, let alone to Jewry? So, I'm writing that the one tradition which could approach making sense of the catastrophe, namely that the catastrophe is itself the consequence in judgment for sin, is totally incompatible with present Jewish self-assessment. They cannot conceive that their sin is proportionate to the judgment. And that very inability to see is a cause for catastrophe, so that we need to be stretched out to consider a view like that that has been lost to present consideration.

Now, it's really interesting that the great prophets of exile who warned of exile to come, of the judgment to come, namely Ezekiel and Jeremiah, are also the prophets of restoration. That the word of hope, that out of the calamity of judgment God would bring restoration, is sounded exclusively by the same prophets who also sounded the word of warning of judgment. What do you make of that? That the privilege of speaking the word that would be the basis for the hope of Israel's restoration and return was given exclusively to the men who were faithful to not withhold the hard word of judgment and devastation.

That says to me that that will be true in the future as well. That the men who are today the false prophets of false hope, saying that this shall not come upon you, will not be able to speak a prophetic word of hope when Israel will desperately need to hear it. And just to refresh your memory, the speaking of that word of hope is not just going to be a little pat on the back to a people who are down and out, but will be a very life-giving provision from God to enable them to survive until the condition of that hope comes.

You guys following me? That the word of hope that precedes the experience of it keeps you from the death that you would have experienced in despair until the hope comes. Here we're supposed to be prophetic, but none of us are yet in a place of really esteeming the word for its creative life-giving power when it's the word of truth that comes out of prophetic men who are true. So true that they will not withhold hard words of judgment when it's necessary to express them.

But if we cop out there we're unavailable for the other later. Just to show you a favorite text of mine that this is not speculation, but in Isaiah 35 when the judgment will have taken place and an expulsion and exile will come, and Israel will be cast out again into the nations and the wilderness of the nations of the kind that I described to you yesterday where I was brought in Mexico and I despaired that I would get out of it myself alive, though we had a four-wheeled vehicle. This is what weary bands of Jews will be

marching through.

And you guys either have to pray for me of being off the deep end and highly exaggerated in my views, or I need to be strengthened in the lonely place I occupy in believing and speaking these things. I foresee Jews today now living in comfortable circumstances of life, soon to experience being stripped of everything, radically expelled from their places of security and prosperity, without a cotton-picking thing on their backs, but whatever they have on, moving through places that are so bleak, so forbearing, that if God did not break forth pools of water in that wilderness, they would perish. If God did not keep them from the heat and pass through the rivers, they would expire.

They will be supernaturally kept. But even with that, they're going to be so stretched out as unto death, not only because of the physical thing that they're experiencing that has come upon them suddenly, but the moral devastation of being stripped of everything, their security. I mean, look at German Jews that before the time of Hitler, they had on their fireplaces the picture of Uncle Otto with the iron cross that he won in World War I. They were German citizens.

They were more German than they were Jews and could not believe that this gutter snipe, this clown in the bar, in the beer halls, in the cellars of Germany, would one day rise to become the chancellor of the nation and set in motion the process of their extermination. They were Germans. They had the breadth of culture.

They were the ones who were able to quote Goethe, Schiller, Fichte, and Hegel to the Gentiles. They made German writers their culture heroes. When that all of a sudden comes down and you find yourself behind barbed wire and living like an animal from crust of bread, if you can get it, and being whipped and--I mean, men threw themselves on the electric charged barbed wire to commit suicide.

They could not bear the anguish of the contrast from the privileged life of affluence to being now a number with lice covered and without hope. What would it be for Calvin Klein and-- Woody Allen. Woody Allen and these guys who were living sumptuous lifestyles with villas and homes in three or four different places and celebrated fat bank accounts and security, all of a sudden to suffer being stripped and find themselves propelled into the wilderness and in fear for their very lives day by day.

And it's in this context that we need to read Isaiah 35. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them. The nations will not be glad for them.

They'll be expelled. But the wilderness will. The desert shall rejoice and blossom as rose, shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing, and so on.

They shall see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God. Now we come to this part. Strengthen ye the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees.

Say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong. Fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance.

Even God with a recompense, he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a heart and the tongue of the dumb sing.

For in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert, both spiritually as well as physically, because someone is able to say to them in the depth of their depravity and disillusionment, be

strong. Fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance.

Even God with a recompense, he will come and save you. You know, there's saying and saying. Have you ever heard the nine men speak from the same text and come out from the service and yawn? And the tenth man speaks in the same text and you go down on your face and you're devastated.

How come? Same text, essentially the same word, the same preaching. What did a woman say to Elijah? Now I know by this that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth. It could be technically be the same word in nine other mouths, but out of the prophetic mouth, when she says it's truth, it's more than just an acknowledgement that it's, you know, it could be lined up with the word.

It's a living word. It's powerfully true. That's the kind of word that Israel needs to hear in the wilderness.

And I believe this, that the only men that will be able to speak it are the men who have first spoken uncompromisingly the word of judgment that will bring them into the wilderness. For which reason already now I'm persona non grata, unwelcomed in Israel. And there's not a trip that I've taken in the last three years to find out that this meeting was canceled in Germany and this meeting in Switzerland, because I'm promoting a view that is found offensive, but of those who do not believe that such calamity will come.

That I'm accused of turning the churches against Israel and even of being anti-Semitic. And of what was Jeremiah accused? My God, the man was lowered into a pit. Okay.

They could not abide his presence. And so this observation that Thomas Raitt makes, that the prophets of exile are also the prophets of restoration is a profound point. That privilege of speaking the word of restoration and hope was not given to those who had not the stomach to proclaim judgment, the unwelcomed word.

And what we're saying about speaking to Israel probably is equally true in speaking to the church. Who will really bring a word of hope to the church? Those who will not spare the church in words that they need to hear, that are of a kind that will be judgment. Just to make this additional point about those who will be able to speak the word of hope that will save men before the hope comes, is that they spoke the theme of restoration in the face of the conditions of judgment.

In other words, before there was any visible prospect for hope of restoration, they spoke that word into the midst of the devastating circumstance. They saw it by the eye of the spirit and they proclaimed it when there was no visible evidence around them to support them in having such a view. What's the point of that? What does that underline? Something about the prophetic call, something about the nature of prophets who can see something while the disaster is the thing that is visibly before you and speak it before there's any evidence that it could be fulfilled.

It requires a consummate faith, an ultimate faith, a prophetic faith, and something like what we were talking last night. We don't have to wait for the word to come because when the word comes, of course we'll not be obedient. I'm telling so many people, when God tells me, I said, of course, when he tells you, there's no question, but you'll have to do it.

What if he's waiting for you to take the initiative? What if he's waiting to see how far you're willing to go? You don't have to move to Minnesota if you don't want to, but are you willing? I think so many of the last day's decisions will be of this kind. It's really still infantile to think that the uttermost expression of consecration to God is doing what he says. Kid stuff.

God forbid we should not do what he says, but will we do what he desires before he says it, where he will not be required to say it, where we ourselves will intuit his desire and be willing to take the risk of it. I mean, this school of the prophets, what are we trying to do? We're trying to underline what that word implies. What does that mean? What is that calling? What must it be in the last days? And you know what one of the accusations that I've had to bear? You think you're an Old Testament prophet and you need to know that that's passe.

We have New Testament prophets that are different. You think, as if I've chosen, but I understand what they're getting at. And here's what I believe.

That indeed, if Old Testament prophets are extinct, I believe that the last days will call for them again. That something of the same Ezekiel and Jeremiah ability to not withhold and to bring the word of judgment. That whatever the character is that is able to bear that is the same faith and character that can see the promise of God before there's anything in evidence of it and proclaim it with a faith that will give hope to those who hear it.

That their word will be life-giving. It's the word of truth in their mouth. That kind of prophet, again, will conclude the age.

To call that Old Testament prophet is misnomer. These are prophets of an oracular kind whose words are life-giving and they are words addressed to a nation, to the church, to God's people. And I believe that this is part of the restoration that is now taking place.

There are New Testament church prophets, but I'm looking for and waiting for those that share the character and the faith of an Ezekiel and a Jeremiah. Let me just read how Thomas Raitt, the author that I'm citing from, sums up what we are now discussing. Their proclamation of that hope is entirely proportionate to the unflinching proclamation of the disaster as judgment.

It's one thing to talk about disaster, but to explain disaster as judgment is quite another thing. That's where you prick the hearer. Jeremiah and Ezekiel's oracles of judgment were more painful to utter because they were delivered in the actual existential situation of Judah's demise.

It's painful to bring a word to say, your God will vindicate you. He will restore you. You will rebuild the cities that have been made waste and have been left desolate, when all they see is the desolate smoking ruins.

Imagine speaking to that. Somebody would just want to turn around and strip the flesh from your bones. They don't want to hear that.

It's almost like a provocation to say that there's hope when you're looking at the physical evidences of disaster. And that's exactly what they did. And so the oracles of deliverance require deeper faith and hope in the future because there was as yet no historical hint that such eternal events could become an actuality.

A prophet always sees the thing that is future, but he speaks of it as if it's present. They're somehow in that place in God that is beyond past, present, and future. They see it as immediate.

It's so real and actual in their seeing, and they convey it as actuality. Both the judgment to come and the restoration to come. And to those who do not have a prophetic ear, that word can be so offensive and so grating that you just want to extinguish.

In fact, what has been the fate of men who have brought such messages, but stoning. The condemnation of Jesus who gilded the sepulcher of the prophets that were slain between the porch and the altar. The whole history of Israel's prophets is a history of death violently by those who could not bear their word.

So I'm suspecting that the last day's prophetic ministry will be something very much like that. In fact, I write very much in my opinion of what shall be prophetically required from us at the end, when the word is required to sustain those who would likely otherwise perish before the actual deliverance comes. Let's take a little break at this point and

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