

K-513 Theology of Exile (2 of 2)

by Art Katz

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding God's judgment and its connection to sin, righteousness, and mercy, and how this understanding can deepen our knowledge of God.

Duration: 59:38

Scripture: Exodus 3:2, Ezekiel 37:1

Topics: "Exile", "Judgment and Mercy", "Understanding God"

Description

Art Katz emphasizes the significance of understanding God's judgment as a means to grasp His true nature, particularly in the context of the Holocaust and the exile of Israel. He argues that judgment is not contrary to God's mercy but is essential for a complete understanding of His character. By examining the painful realities of judgment, believers can deepen their knowledge of God and avoid a distorted view of Him. Katz challenges the church to confront uncomfortable truths about sin and judgment, suggesting that true faith emerges from grappling with these difficult concepts. Ultimately, he calls for a prophetic understanding that reconciles God's judgment with His mercy, urging believers to seek a deeper relationship with God through the examination of these profound issues.

Transcript

Before the break, I made a reference to the Holocaust as a burning bush, judgment as fire. Fire is always equated with judgment. And that the sending of Moses waited for a man who would turn aside to see.

This is a whole message that I have, and maybe some of you may have heard it, but just to fit it in with what we're discussing now, that there's something in the examination of the issues of judgment that fits a man for sending, particularly as the agent of God's deliverance of a nation out of bondage. What implications for our future. And it's only to be found in the fire of judgment.

And to turn aside to see and to look into that is no small thing. As because I said before, one brother almost had a nervous breakdown doing so. It's very painful to consider the issues of judgment.

And yet in it alone are revelations of the knowledge of God that are not to be found in any other place. We are suffering as a church from a distorted view of God, much more the projection of ourselves than what he in fact is in himself, for the absence of the consideration of God as judge. I can't say enough about that.

Judgment is central to the whole apprehension of God as God. And it's not in contention or in opposition to his other attributes, all the attributes of his character, because mercy is only mercy in view of God's judgment. Outside of judgment, mercy is a sentimentality.

And it saves us from the distortion of his other attributes to see those attributes in connection with the attribute of judgment, which is predicated on righteousness. And of course, the greatest evidence of God's uncompromising jealousy over that is the willingness to submit his own son unto the cruelest of deaths to requite sin for mankind and for his own people. He didn't make light of it.

He fully recognized the gravity of sin and the requirement of judgment for it, but he bore it himself. This is a provision, a potential to bring us into dimensions of the apprehension of God unlike any other subject, but it has been avoided or misrepresented or misused. Even as we were talking in the break about Schindler's List or the celebration of the Holocaust or the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. or Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, the whole play and emphasis upon the Holocaust, even especially by the Jewish community, is not in the sense in which we are now seeking to understand it as judgment and as revelation of the judge who is also the restorer in mercy, but in a more self-pitying way of being the victim of the onslaught of powerful forces while we were just ghetto Jews and harmless in our ghetto Talmud life, and never again will we allow, as if that's the point of it.

There's a greater point of it that has never been understood and never been sought. I stumbled into a seminar given at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill by Jewish organization, B'nai B'rith, on revisionism. That was a remarkable thing.

They were lamenting the fact that there's an active movement trying to nullify the historicity of the Holocaust like it never happened. It's just an exaggerated thing that Jews have employed for their own purposes. And so finally, somewhere in the occasion that came, I sort of made clear my view that we ourselves are guilty of the very same thing, that what others are doing in denying the reality of the Holocaust, we have done with the reality of the crucifixion of Jesus, and that whatsoever we have sowed, we are now reaping.

And that in fact, merely to remember the Holocaust statistically, and to examine how many died and by what kind of gas they were brought to their deaths, is a worse crime than to pass it over altogether. That unless you're examining the Holocaust with the intention of understanding where God was in the course of it, and ask the great questions about it, you are in fact guilty of a worse thing than neglecting it altogether, which you're accusing the revisionists. So I don't know what effect that had, but that's a great point.

Ezekiel and Jeremiah are exactly the opposite. The prophets of exile are men who borrowed in and dug in and faced the hard questions that the calamity of exile and expulsion meant and brought. Why? Where is God? What is he saying? What's the meaning? And pursued that.

And I write here, had such questions been asked about the Holocaust, they might not needed to have been raised again. It's a real big question of whether if Israel had benefited and understood the Holocaust as judgment, and all of its previous calamities as judgment, whether there would again need to be future such judgments. But we know that the future one is final.

Out of it we hope will come a redeemed, we know will come a redeemed remnant. So the ability to raise the real questions is critical. And that's part of the prophetic calling, not only about the sins of Israel, but the condition of the church, our own condition.

To look into something fearlessly. I very rarely quote rabbinical sources or commend them, but in this one place about Moses turning aside to see, I think that the rabbis are right on. They say the thing that won God's heart and allowed him to call Moses out of the burning bush when he saw that Moses turned, was that when a man will turn aside to see, he need not have any assurance he'll ever be able to turn back to where he was before he turned.

That is to say, he can forfeit and lose everything that he understood about God, about faith, about himself in that turning. You threaten, you put in jeopardy your whole corpus of understanding that has sustained you until that moment. It's a great risk to turn aside to see, looking into a burning bush.

But it set in motion the things that made Moses of the liver of his people. And I think it's a question before us. So I appreciate the opportunity to probe these things.

And if the school is not for your benefit, it's for my benefit that it gives me occasion to go through these papers and to have interaction over them. So to ask questions, I often say anybody can give answers, but I find very few who know how to ask questions. Searching questions that draw out the meaning of an event.

Better to be able to raise good questions than to give glib answers. And by doing so, the author says, they significantly expanded the framework of Israelite faith through a rediscovery of additional foundations. Well, I'll just paraphrase that.

The raising of the great questions of judgment expanded the foundations of the faith in the knowledge of God. And so even a devastation has redemptive prospect. And we need additional foundations.

We need expanded and enlarged foundations ourselves about the knowledge of God. A deepened understanding of God himself, which is not to say the understanding about God, but understanding of God as he in fact is in himself and not as we thought him to be. You know that verse that says, you thought I was such a one as yourself.

And not only is Israel guilty of that, the Israel of the past, the church today, we do not know as we ought. But there's something about raising and examining the great questions of judgment that bring us to an expanded knowledge of God as he in fact is that nothing else provides. So this author calls exile an anti-Exodus.

Instead of God bringing his people in, he's thrusting them out. It seems to be a contradiction of every category. And how could God do that with the people who are elect and who are to be the people of his kingdom and the land out of which his government goes forth to the nations.

It seems that it is defeating the very purposes of God. And that's why the very thought that present Israel could again suffer catastrophe and the calamity of expulsion is considered unthinkable. It's self-defeating.

How can God allow that? I mean, isn't this what we've all long been waiting? Isn't this what the prophets have promised? How could God allow three or four million to return and now to throw them out again? And all of these Russians that are now coming, this is what is thrown into my teeth. Is God going to allow them to come and then expel them? It's unthinkable, but it raises this question. What will God allow? How far will he go in the fulfillment of his own redemptive purposes? Are you presuming to say and to know how far God will go? By that same kind of logic, you would have said the Holocaust is impossible.

And the Jewish community is bewildered that among those who should have perished if God was judging world Jewry should have been the American Jew. It should have been the secular Steven Spielberg and the other guys that we have been mentioning. Instead, the principal victims of the Holocaust were the religious Jews.

It was the Hasidim, the Polish Jewry, the heart of orthodoxy that perished as well as some secular ones. So how can you say God is judging? And how is it just? What does that presume? That somehow God looked with favor on their religious activities being somehow pleasing in his sight. We do not know as we ought to know and let God rattle our box and let him shake up our every category until it's upside down and inside out.

What shall we say about Job? When God boasts, have you seen such a one in the earth who eschews evil, who is upright, who fears God? He boasts on him as the foremost statement of godliness and then allows the most devastating judgments to come totally unrelated to the issue of Job's sin but required to bring even that godly man to a revelation in the knowledge of God that far exceeded. Oh, I've heard about you by the hearing of my ear but now my eye seeth and I abhor myself and I repent in dust and ashes. Then God says now, he says to Job's comforters who were eloquent in their spirituality, you have not spoken as my servant Job has spoken.

My anger is kindled against you. Now pray for them, you know, because you have come to a real place of understanding. Now you can pray for them.

I have lost all connection with a fellowship and here's a fellowship that was celebrated, apostolic, other fellowships under their oversight and we walked in, it was sheer spiritual death and the Lord had me to speak from Job and say, you guys are not even in the place of Job's comforters. You're not even eloquent about the faith and yet you're celebrating yourself as if you've got it all together. You don't even begin to know as you ought to know.

Boy, I tell you, we've not heard from them since but the wife of the pastor who was like death warmed up when we had dinner in her house that night and every previous time I had seen her came alive. She came to us as we were putting away our books. We felt like a turd.

I mean, people were shunning us with their shoulders and the despicable things that we had spoken and spoiled their fun and their self-celebration but her face, she was alive and thanked us for the word of truth that had come. So I'm saying all that to say this, we do not know as we ought to know. The church, the greatest thing that the church is presently suffering is its inadequate view of God and the principal reason is the omission of things that pertain to Israel by which God intended that we should be instructed.

Not only Israel's biblical past but its recent past, namely the Holocaust and the anticipation of a soon coming future of calamity and devastation which would bring us a sense of God's fear and the knowledge of how God will go. If you've read the book, Reality, you know my famous encounter with the author of the great celebrated Jewish author of Holocaust books. Oh, he was.

Haley was when I met him at one of his public presentations where he boasted that he was reading the scriptures, studying the scriptures with a rabbi twice in the week. And I came to him privately after it was over and I said, seeing that you're studying the scriptures weekly, to what degree would you be willing to acknowledge that the Holocaust and every previous Jewish calamity is the fulfillment of the scriptures spoken and judgmental for us in the concluding chapters of Leviticus and Deuteronomy? He looked at me

and said, I refuse to consider that. It's not, it may not be true.

Whether it's true or not, I will not hear of it. And I thought to myself, that one mentality by the foremost proponent and commentator on the Holocaust, who won the Pulitzer Prize, a celebrated humanist, that one statement is sufficient to justify the Holocaust itself. I will not consider.

Think of what's being said. I will not consider. God may say so, but I will not consider is the very heart of human hubris, pride, and celebration of man above God, which is the quintessence of what sin is and for which God's judgments fall.

And that by the writer of the Holocaust who lost every member of his family in the Holocaust. Here's a thought that comes to me right now. I've already mentioned the verse, in all of their afflictions, he is afflicted.

He's no passive observer who looks upon Israel's calamities from a distance. He's in the midst of it. He bears the whole grievous moral pain.

But in fact, that's very at the heart of priestly intercession, identification. What about ourselves? Their afflictions are coming, but what will be our posture with regard to them? Will God allow us to speak to them a word of judgment? I remember what David said in our prayer time before we pray for these Jewish personalities, are we condemning them? Is there an identification with them? I think we're going to be required prophetically to be in the midst and to bear their afflictions as our own. If we're going to be a voice today, that's a credible voice, a powerful and a penetrating voice really from a distance, let alone from a place of contempt, which characterizes many Christian commentators today.

There's a contempt for Israel, a judgmentalism, and something in their critical spirit that is barbed. God will not give them the privilege of speaking an oracular word of life. This opens up the whole issue of sin.

What is it? Is there corporate culpability? You remember that what Jesus said to Stephen, as your fathers did, so do you also. You do always grieve the Holy Spirit. And Jesus said of those who are gilding the tombs of the prophets, who said, if we had lived in a time of our fathers, we would not have done that.

He said, because you say that upon you will come the guilt of the deaths of all of the prophets from the beginning right to the end, because you absolve yourself and remove yourself from the implication in that guilt, because you say we would not have. So God has a view that is profoundly different from modern man's. As I said before, it's on the basis of his view that his judgment comes, and not on the basis of our own.

You imagine the shriek and the howl when multitudes stand before the judgment seat, who have been living self-applauding, approving lives and think they're doing God's service, all of a sudden to be judged by another criteria, God's, and be totally unprepared for it. The devastating moral shock that they will take into eternity, that will never be relieved, the shriek and the howl. And if we understood that, how much more forcible would our own witness to the unsaved be now? So you see, even here, there's an evangelistic implication.

And what is our evangelism today, by the way? Are you saved, brother? God has a plan for your life. The benefits that will accrue to you by believing, not at all of being saved from the mortifying, the eternal mortification of eternal judgment without remedy by a people who never thinks of it. So here is a practical, the issue of Israel is the issue of the church, because the church that is not evangelistically effectual, who

has not a sufficient understanding of the terrors of hell is not the church.

It's something less than something other. What we're going to see in Israel's final calamity is the reiteration of the suffering and the crucifixion of Jesus himself. There's such a remarkable parallel.

But they themselves will cry out, you know, where is God? There's going to be a sense of total abandonment. And that's why the prophetic word that comes to them, don't be afraid, don't fear, your God is coming. He will vindicate you.

He will establish you. Saves people from actually perishing in despair. So acutely felt will be the sense of God's forsaken, the forsakeness of God.

And how many of us have tasted this in our own walk? Have you gone through an experience in a phase where you feel the total abandonment of God at a time when by every reckoning, he should be most profoundly present. And you can't explain it, that he's not explaining. And you just simply have to bear it.

Although the scriptures are silent, I wonder what Moses's experience was for the 40 years in his wilderness before the call of God came through the burning bush. Was he basking in the sense of God's presence and approval? Or was he experiencing the total emptying of a sense of forsakenness and abandonment? And maybe brooding over his, the sin of murdering that Egyptian soldier and feeling like he had really failed God. And God allowed him to steep in that, the total emptying.

And I've experienced some measure of that myself. Unbelievably painful. And one of my earliest experiences was the lifting of the anointing of God while I was giving my testimony.

I was sailing along with such supreme confidence and blessing people. And at that time, God so anointed the testimony, they would sit for hours to hear every detail. And there came a moment when all of a sudden, the anointing left.

And I don't have a word to describe the utter feeling of nakedness. It was a horrible vacuum. And at the silent cry out of my heart, young as I was, I said, Lord, I understand exactly what you're doing.

I was presuming upon you, thinking that I was performing something. And the anointing came back and the Lord has not had to do that since that one time. But the memory of it remains unspeakably painful, the sense of abandonment, God's forsakenness.

And so it'll be the nation's experience. And yet to encourage them in hope will be the prophetic task. The issue of judgment either offends or draws.

We'll either look away or look in. And it may well be again that those who even have a sympathetic affection for Israel want so much to see her succeed, that if this devastation comes again, they will be so offended by it that they will say, where is God? And how can we have confidence in his word? As we thought that that was the restoration that had been promised. So we had, well, that's the end of our confidence.

So this is so critical. And that's why even a word needs to go out now. And about three or four years ago, when the Lord gave me the Ezekiel 37 message and to bring it to Israel, the foremost thought in my inner man was that though the message may be rejected, there needs to be the first sounding of the possibility of a coming calamity.

Lest when it comes, the unwary be divested of their faith in the disillusionment that will fall upon them. But that was God's mercy already. The first sounding of a thing that the Christians living in Israel would never have considered.

It's unthinkable. And so the title of this paper is Thinking the Unthinkable. Do we have that capacity? Sin and judgment are inextricably bound up.

So to the degree that we're shunning judgment or it offends us, to that same degree, we're left with an impoverished understanding of sin itself. And if we don't understand sin, how do we understand righteousness? We don't understand judgment, how do we understand mercy? And if we lack both, how do we understand God? Even that small orthodox segment that will acknowledge that Jewish people is relative to sin. And even the expulsion from Israel in 70 AD and 587 with the Babylonian captivity.

But you know how they define the sin? The failure to have put the mezuzah on the door or the failure to have wrapped the phylacteries properly around their arms. I mean, it's a majoring in the minors and missing the whole issue. So therefore, when I came to a statement in one of the two books that I brought the other day, the book by Barron, where he says, and I've got to find this for you, you need to hear it in his exact words.

He said, the rejection and the crucifixion of Jesus was the filling up or the bringing into fullness the long history of Israel's apostasy. And when he said that, something went click. I thought, my God, yes.

Are you blaming us for deicide and killing? Are we Christ killers? Is that our sin? No, it's only the final statement of a long standing sin, a long standing rejection, a long standing apostasy. It is the final ramification and the outworking of it that when he came whom you were seeking, you not only could not recognize him, but were threatened by him and had him destroyed. It's the capstone of your sin.

And until we repent for that, we're not even talking about the right sin. If we still think that we didn't put the mezuzah on the door, you know, that is that little parchment, got to be at a certain angle. We didn't wind the phylacteries right, or we failed to do this, or some minor ceremonial lapse.

We have not even understood the issue of sin as God himself sees it, and as the prophets have proclaimed it consistently through all the books. So that when I came to a series of talks in Phoenix, when I was living out there for a season, a rabbi on a Thursday afternoon gave a talk on the prophets of Israel and began to touch a little bit about their lament and their cry about the sins of the nation. And in the question and answer period, I was so deflated.

The questions were so, I remember what I said about asking questions is more important than good answers. Questions were pitiful. Until finally I got up and I said, can you tell me when historically Israel as a nation has ever acknowledged the cry of God as expressed through the prophets? And the answer was for the boys.

So there's a whole indictment. God has a controversy with us, but most Jews overwhelmingly have no knowledge of that controversy. They have no knowledge that there's an issue that is unrequited that God yet waits for.

If it does not come, we will suffer again, calamity to instruct us in it. And so how is it that they don't know if they themselves have turned to other sources than the scripture and have not been the people of the book as we're reputed to be, who should have had the responsibility of making their sins known? Yes, of

course. But I mean, the rabbis share the failure with the people outside of them.

Who do know the testimony of the prophets, the church. What hope then to have an understanding of God's view, except it would have been communicated through the church. In fact, Christian commentators and church figures are now subscribing to the Jewish interpretation of the Holocaust as being the failure of Christianity and not the statement of Israel's sin.

You can imagine not only the understanding that a church must have to proclaim this to the Jews in their midst, but the courage. Let me just quote directly from this source to show you how beautifully he sums this up. Exile refuses to fit the main models used to understand how God revealed himself in and through the Old Testament.

It doesn't fit. How is the God of mercy allowing this? One would have no way of holding together how the God of Israel could make unconditional promises of punishment and extermination. And a few chapters and a few years later promise unconditional and sweeping deliverance.

Thus, the traditional theological conservative model for understanding has great difficulty dealing with the unique issues of exile and the inner dynamic of the faith that can alone respond to it. So it's ultimate crisis for faith, for the understanding of God. But out of that crisis equally is the prospect for a deepened revelation of God and deeper foundations of faith.

Though faith seems like it cannot bear to be stretched to breaking with what comes with judgment, exile, expulsion, disaster. One is pushed through to realize that religious belief cannot simply draw on the traditions of the past, but must be ready to re-synthesize them creatively and faithfully in order to say yes to a present that is disturbing and a future which is problematic. We're at the verge of sweeping apostasy.

In fact, in the view of some commentators, it's already with us. That there's a daily loss of faith and the church, even in its best forms, though they may not even themselves recognize it, is moving toward apostasy, moving away from authentic, apostolic, prophetic faith. And what will happen when a calamity comes of this proportion that they cannot interpret it, rightly understand, it will be like the coup de grace, the final thing that blows them away.

One is pushed to realize that religious belief cannot simply draw on the traditions of the past. We're not going to get by in the last days with schoolroom Christianity and subscribing to the doctrines of the faith and evangelical credos of a kind that could have sustained us in a less trying time. We're going to have to have a radical faith for a radical time is what he's saying.

And must be ready to re-synthesize and creatively and faithfully in order to say yes to a present. To acknowledge that this is coming from God's hand. He's sovereign still.

He's the God of history. He's in charge to say yes to a present that is disturbing and a future which is problematic. So, and I write the whole issue for the church of the last days that will make it either apostate or apostolic.

The issue of apostasy or being apostolic will depend on whether we are able to, as use his language, re-synthesize the faith, to find creative ways to understand a problematic time and be brought into a deeper apprehension of the knowledge of God. We fail at that. Apostasy is the only alternative.

One cannot institutionalize as final, definitive, or normative any single perceived pattern of how God works in history. Isn't that a remarkable statement? We want to build free booths. We want to nail it down.

This is the way that God is. This is the way I understand him. This is the way I expect him to work.

But all of a sudden, you're blown out of the saddle. God is doing something totally unexpected, in a way that seems even to contradict his own character. How do you follow that? So you can't institutionalize God as final or normative and say that this is the only way that he works.

Because to tell God how he works is for you to be above him and to determine who he is. God will never do that. Is God going to bring Russian Jews all that way and then allow them to suffer devastation? For you to say what God will do on the basis of the what you understand of the past is to limit God or to project a God of your own making that is not God. He says, events set for theology its task and refuse to submit to any secure system of interpretation.

You know what I would say? Leaving aside the benefits that come to Israel by judgment and restoration, the church needs this. We need to come out of our fixed categories and our conventional views however correct, court on court that they are and be compelled to re-examine and come into a faith of a real kind that is forced upon us by events so that the judgment coming upon Israel is not only intended for Israel's sake but also for the church. It's a multi-purpose thing like God serving two ends at the same time which is pictured in the prophet Ezekiel being brought down into the valley of dry bones.

The hand of the Lord is upon me and he brought me out. Out of what? Out of my conventional categories and down into a place I would not have chosen to go into the midst of a valley of dry bones and was marched all around the grit, the ugliness of death, the reality that no one wants to see that the flesh shrinks from the face of the prophet is pushed right into it and that's where the chapter begins. It's got to begin with that forced to re-examine his faith.

Can these bones live, son of man? My old faith is not sufficient for this crisis. If you'd asked me an easier thing in keeping with what I understood I would say yes but this explodes what I understand even faith to mean what can even be hoped for in you. You've got to give me a larger view of yourself capable of a resurrection from this death and so God is as much concerned with the prophet and the enlargement of his faith and the coming into a fullness of God's intention as he is with the dry bones themselves.

There's something reciprocal between the church and Israel in the majesty of God or the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God that's past finding out and we're going to be called to interpret these calamities to a church that is going to be knocked for a loop and will not be able to interpret it in a life-giving way for them unless we have come to that kind of real faith in our own experience and that's why God is stretching our categories now and knocking us for a loop before the calamity of Israel comes for many of us we're experiencing it personally.

There's a wonderful statement in a book by a German theologian Moltmann, what's his first name?

On the Crucified God probably the greatest single book that I've read on the crucifixion the theological implications he says true faith begins where the atheist thinks it should end namely at the cross in view of a devastated Christ who has failed every hope for that his disciples had remember the two on the road to Emmaus a lack and a less we had thought it had been he who would have restored the good Israel and there he is a gangrenous cadaver hanging on the cross a shattered piece of humanity absolutely

devastated so that's why he says true faith begins where the atheist thinks it should end true faith begins at the cross in view of the devastation of all that could have been hoped for religiously and out of that disappointed hope that was correct in its way and yet not correct enough

comes the true faith true faith last day's faith enduring faith overcoming faith begins where the atheist thinks it should end so the debacle of Israel shattered and cast again into the nations than the last days will be for many a loss of their inadequate faith but for a few perhaps the beginning of a true faith when they recognize God in his judgments and the mercies that will follow the event set for theology its task a remarkable how biblical prophecy often waits for the event itself is present Israel the fulfillment of prophecy? well what will we believe when present Israel is devastated and expelled again then we need to see prophecy in the light of the event and interpret it anew so that requires something from us as students not only of the word but of events like the meaning of

of the killing of those Muslims in Hebron by a Jewish doctor who is also orthodox how do we understand that event? is it an aberration? a freako thing from a deranged man or is it a statement of something about a condition of a nation brought to light by the action of a single man as a representative so we're really called to be students of life and events in history and that refuse to submit to any secure system of interpretation it was the devastating impact of the Babylonian exile which first forced them out of what had become an institutionalized orthodox view of how God acts in history unlike many people today who are unable to find God in history look for God in nature Jeremiah and Ezekiel broke through to a new vision of God in events something happened to the prophets themselves

because they looked uncompromisingly without turning away into the fiery the burning bush I would say for myself my anticipation of Israel's soon coming devastation is not so much exclusively based on what I see in the scripture which seems to confirm it but something intuitive in my own spirit and something of an understanding of the whole counsel of God and of the faith and of the necessity for judgment and the foundational belief in resurrection and the understanding that there's no glory except the glory that issues out of life from the dead that present Israel cannot be the vehicle of God's millennial glory but only something that has first been brought into death and from death been raised to be that kind of nation that's not only events but our whole comprehension of God his way

our knowledge of his word in general his ways that have been exhibited the understanding that we have out of our own experience of how central resurrection is in anything that pertains to the glory of God and then this raises the question how then shall Israel be exempt from the necessity of resurrection if they're elect for that glory and then therefore what will be the death that precedes the resurrection if not a soon coming calamity and then when you turn to the scriptures there's the corroboration so that says a lot about the prophetic man his constituency his makeup his mentality his jealousy for God's glory his understanding of God's work in some ways and his own experience of them personally in his own life it can't be abstract you know the principle of resurrection I mean your

community has got to come into death and you're going to be expelled from the very property and it's going to languish in death for three years and you're going to eat and taste that death it'll be a ghost town in a no man's land before you're returned again and be sitting in the same buildings but this time with life and prospects of a more significant kind all of this calamity serves a purpose in requiring us to re-examine our faith and come into more real appropriation of it and not to say God will not do God devastates us for things that he will do that we cannot explain in what we thought of God and I wrote here God is not God as he in fact is until man cannot define him nor is he Lord who we have submitted to him as the indefinable

God this is my throwing my two cents in is God

really God so long as we're the ones who define him and say what he will do and how he will be but it's a submission to God beyond our definition that really makes him Lord and this crisis stretches us to that place you know what I mean or else there's something that is called religious by its very nature that invariably brings us to a place where however correct we are we have God in our box in our definition in our understanding and that's so deadly that I would not put it past him to bring crisis of an ultimate kind to break that open and stretch us beyond it until we surrender to a God that yea though you slay me though I don't understand you though I cannot define you though you seem to be contradicting yourself yet are you God and Lord I submit to you as that God that I cannot

define and by the way you're not required to explain yourself to me when he's got us on that ground he's got us okay to think we know when to name God in effect is to have dominion over him just what we're now saying we want the security of knowing over the tension of true faith that's an archaicism we want the security of knowing over the willingness to suffer the tension of true faith to come to the I am that I am and I will be who I will be and this shall be my name throughout all your generations as a memorial forever so there's something in us that wants to know and to name to think we know and to name God is in effect to have dominion over him we want the security of knowing over the tensions of true faith it makes you to understand why the quest for the true faith is lifelong and

worth every investment of God that it might be brought through the fire and as pure as gold everything else can perish but somehow this faith which is to say the knowledge of God as he is the ultimate end and the object of all things sort of to allow the word faith to be made hash of or be merchandised in or made a formula for gratifying our carnal lust is such a disservice to God is such a disfiguring of a great word and not the least of our prophetic obligations is to stand as guardians over the great words faith, love, you know righteousness, sin, judgment because if we lose them or even the words prophet or prophecy itself or apostle apostolic if that goes into the wastebasket and suffers abuse and loses its real meaning we have lost all so there needs to be a real jealousy for words

for these great words and their meanings and notice how these very words today are suffering a tremendous abuse and misuse they have been cheapened that's something to do with the contending for the faith that was once and for all given the saints hard to imagine that an unbelieving nation can even recognize let alone hear a prophetic call to repentance knowing that the scriptures already described the two prophets the two anointed sons of well who testified to the nation for three and a half years and they considered their testimony a torment those who dwell in the earth and celebrate the death of those prophets and send out gifts to one another in the Jerusalem which has become the southern Gomer so it shows a degenerating condition in Israel unable to receive God's final witness and in

fact the raising of them in resurrection is the release of their judgments and then the fall upon the rejecting the prophet rejecting nation to reach to reject the prophet is to reject the testimony of Jesus so that seems to be a picture of a future condition toward which Israel progressively is coming if the church cannot receive the prophetic testimony how shall we expect it for an unbelieving nation nevertheless God senses two witnesses and they may be symptomatic or symbolic of not just two individual men but again some corporate prophetic expression of a cry of God for a three and a half final year period in hope that they might be heard but increasingly I've said within the last year on a couple of occasions when I sensed I was irritating my hearers I said I'm catching a little

glimpse of the experience of those last days two witnesses who I just called it who torment those who dwell here I feel like I'm tormenting you you can hardly bear to hear me and I'm getting a little sense of what of the distaste that might increasingly come for the prophetic man and the prophetic word my word to you is a torment you would rather not have heard it it's making you uncomfortable and I'm sensing your discomfort and that I'm a tormentor because you're dwelling in the earth so it's not a happy premonition of things that are future but even in the church we're going to be a painful discord it's a rare church that will open itself to the hearing of a word that challenges it and calls it to some deeper more painful sacrificial place of consecration and commitment so that has a

lot to say I hope we're not missing these reflections on not only the prophetic call but the prophetic man if you're thin-skinned and cannot bear to hurt people's feelings or that you should be for them a torment rather than a blessing how will you bring the uncompromising word? it means that God has got to so sift us and deal with us that we can bear to be looked upon in that way by even God's own people and still bring the word and for that the preparation is extensive and intensive later on we will talk about true and false prophets but right now this author makes this reference where he says that the ability of Jeremiah and Ezekiel to consider the issues of restoration right in the midst of judgment is a distinctive of true prophets it is precisely the latent or residual presence of

justice and will for judgment in the midst of unconditional deliverance which differentiates the epic of salvation from the shallow grace of false prophecy and this is a long windy statement but he's touching something here that we'll come back to I just want to throw that into the midst of our conversation for now and I'll paraphrase it in my own words it's the grit and the ability to consider future restoration in the midst of necessary judgment and devastation that distinguishes the true prophet from the false false prophets have no stomach to consider judgment and their word of restoration is therefore false that the true word of restoration can only come out of the same one who is willing to submit to the whole counsel of God and that this is the difference between the true salvation

from the shallow grace of false prophecy and I wrote in parenthesis that's not in my opinion any grace at all false prophecy is not a grace but a deception that could lead to the unpreparedness of saints and their collapse when the unanticipated calamity falls God is triune and composite not only in his persons but in his acts that's my statement could it be that the simplistic and erroneous monotheism warded by Judaism misses the one because it misses the other you know that Jews celebrate Shema Yisrael my mother when I drove her home last night sang the Shema Yisrael in the car because she was stung by what she was able to pick up in that Bible study hearing believers speak about the Lord and his acts and his ways it somehow was threatening to her own little notion of Judaism so she's

saying Shema Yisrael here is a Lord your God as one would if Jews think that they have anything it's this that they are preserving the concept of God as one monotheistically whereas the Christians have disfigured him by making him into three gods we know that God is a composite triunity in the fullness of the genius of what God is in his own Godhead and to reduce him to a monotheistic view is to make him something other than what he in fact is so this issue of God in three persons is not just some little doctrinal difference between Christianity and Judaism it's the very issue of God and the knowledge of God which by the way was nowhere more radically revealed than at the cross when God in the son was suffering on the earth and God as the father was looking upon and ordaining that

judgment and that it was being performed by the office of the spirit without spot a sacrifice unto God by the eternal spirit you have all three persons of the Godhead dramatically and powerfully revealed at the

crucifixion which we Jews have historically shunted and pushed away from our historical memory and in doing so have lost the view of God as God and are offended that he's a God in three persons and think we're doing him service to hold him as one monotheistically now what am I saying that this issue of a triune and composite God is not only revealed in his persons it's revealed in his acts could it be that the simplistic erroneous monotheism what about Judaism misses the one because it's the other because we have missed God in his acts his composite acts judgment and mercy we have

missed him in his persons what of Christians who cannot reconcile the God of judgment and the God of mercy you know that there's a certain tradition in Judaism that there are two messiahs the messiah that suffers and the messiah that rules they can't see them both as being one it's a contradiction in terms and to what degree in our own unconscious way do we have our own separate gods the God of the Old Testament the God of the New the God of judgment the God of mercy the God who is unsparing the God of love God is God in his unity not only in his persons but in his acts so here again in discussing the issue of God's judgments if we have an invitation and an opportunity to see him in his unity both in his mercy and in his judgment and if we fail to apprehend that we're not rightly

discerning God and again you make a God of your own making and in effect are without God can this view of God that reconciles his judgment with his deliverance be a key also against last day's deception as well if we're deceived about God in his makeup to what else will we be subject as deception so there's an inextricable connection between one kind of deception and all deception if you miss at the foundation the apprehension of God in his unity in his person in his acts and have another view that is erroneous and deceptive to what other deceptions will you be liable how does the prophet go from the proclamation of the one to the proclamation of the other except that his own self is contradicted unto death and only by that death be an oracle unto life well I'll take it I'll mark that

we'll pick up from that point tomorrow how does the prophet how is he able to swing from judgment to mercy to God of love and to God of devastation without contradicting himself how do you preach the one thing and prophetically proclaim the one thing and prophetically proclaim the other it's schizophrenic I mean it'll tear you to shreds and I'm going to I'm not saying only by that death can he be an oracle unto life he himself is brought to death in the contradiction of what is required for him to perform and yet the remarkable thing is we're not looking at some dead men who have no personality no identity where you can't distinguish Ezekiel from Jeremiah and Jeremiah from Haggai and or the other prophets they are distinct authentic personalities they express themselves uniquely they are

formidable men they are full of men they are prophetic man is ultimate man because of the contradictions that they're forced both to see and to express they're brought to a kind of death in themselves and out of that comes the more the formidable prophetic life and speaking I'm glad I got it on tape and maybe we'll come back to it tomorrow so think about this whole thing God and his three persons not long ago in a church in Texas where they're struggling over the issue of a single pastor or a corporate expression of authority in a plurality of elders someone was making a case for the single pastor the buck stops here and I heard something just leaped out of my mouth I said you have a monotheistic view of the church isn't that interesting? you see the church only in a church government

only in a singular entity the pastor you do not have a composite view of the authority of the godhead in the government of God for the church through a plurality of elders of inequality and God made that a message and I spoke that as a message the monotheistic versus the triune view of God as reflected even in the issue of church government so we're on the frontier of things that are all brought to life in tantalizing rich

prospect as we invest ourselves in the issue of Israel itself the issue of Israel as you may have heard me say is the issue of the church even its government hallelujah so lord we're over our heads we feel like we're walking like a gangplank over the water and there are sharks looking up at us ready to devour us if we fall in and yet we appreciate lord the investigation

the probing the looking into the fire wanting to understand the deep issues of judgment in which the truest statement of yourself as God is to be found thank you for this day my god when we are ceasing from gratifying our stomachs and our flesh lord and again we ask a blessing because of it or the more and that you would be with us lord and the time that is ours that is even available because it's not given over through food it's preparation it's consumption and it's cleaning up that we might walk with you in the way talking with one another and contemplating and meditating upon the things that are being opened and being brought to that apprehension of yourself for which you wait so thank you put a seal on this lord let nothing be lost to those who are hearing from the tape and ourselves

thank you for this day my god and what is being unfolded by your grace receive our gratitude in jesus name

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