

K-535 the Consummation of Israel and the Church

by Art Katz

Art Katz's sermon emphasizes the necessity of confronting painful truths about Israel and the Church to fulfill God's prophetic calling.

Duration: 59:40

Scripture: Ezekiel 37:4-6, Ezekiel 37:13-14, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Israel"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker describes a worship service where everyone appeared to be joyful and confident. However, the speaker saw through the facade and noticed that people were actually unhappy and insecure. The speaker then discusses the history of Australia and how its people have never fully overcome their feelings of inferiority. The sermon emphasizes the need for true praise and the importance of going through difficult times in order to experience God's grace.

Transcript

"...and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley, which was full of bones, and caused me to pass by him round about, and behold, there were very many in the open valley, and lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Some man can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest." So just to understand right from the beginning, that God is occupied, as we shall see, not only with the valley of dry bones, which is enormously significant to him, that restoration from the dead, but there's another actor here in this chapter, equally of concern to God, called the Son of Man, and that this Son of Man has to be carried out in the Spirit of the Lord, and be brought down into the midst of the valley of dry bones by the hand of the Lord, somehow suggesting that it's not a descent that this Son of Man would willingly desire to do. And that ties in with the last question of why it is that Biblical commentators would much rather prefer to read prophetic scriptures being the statement of Israel's past, rather than a statement of devastation for Israel's future, because there's something in the flesh that does not want to consider a hard scenario.

And evidently the prophet himself is reluctant to go down into the valley of dry bones. So I want to make this point right from the beginning, that if we will not see as God sees, however painful that seeing, if we will not recognize the things that are true, which is to say, as God himself sees them, we forfeit any prophetic use by God. We cannot proceed on the basis of wishful thinking, of things as we would like them

to be, because we love Israel, and haven't they suffered enough, and shouldn't they be restored, and can't the present Israel make it, and won't their condition improve? That's all lovely, and I can understand why you would want and desire that.

But if you allow your desire and your wishful thinking to preempt the grim reality and truth of things as they must be seen, neither then can we address them. If this prophet resisted the hand of the Lord, if he did not allow himself to be brought out by the Spirit, the rest would not be there. There would not have been an agent, as we're going to see, that God could employ to restore Israel.

And I believe that this is prophetic foreshadowing for ourselves. And we need now increasingly to come to a place of the love of the truth. You remember the Thessalonians, who are those that are abandoned to the lie? Those who have forsaken the love of the truth.

So the definition of the love of the truth is the willingness to consider something, however painful, however offensive to our own consideration, however jarring to our own categories, however at odds with what we can hope for and desire and wish for, because it is the truth. That is the number one and first prophetic requirement. And if we do not meet that, we forfeit any capability of being for God prophetically what we must.

So don't let the beginning of this chapter pass you by. Dwell on this. But it begins with this, the hand of the Lord was upon me.

What is that? What is conjured up in your spirit as you hear a phrase like that, the hand of the Lord? It doesn't sound like a little slap on the back. What do you sense? A pressure. A press from God, indicating that there's a reluctance, an unwillingness, even with a prophet.

Remember that Elijah was a man of flesh and blood, like as we. And every one of us want to see and desire better things. But this is, let the Lord help me here, a very critical point now.

We're not going to make it in that moment when the Spirit of God will come upon us and the hand of the Lord will come upon us to see and to identify with things as God sees them even if we are not willing now so to do. If we are living now in a way that skirts the truth, that well, yes, but maybe, and I guess, and will not embrace in full things as God himself sees them, presently for ourselves, our marriages, the condition of our family, our children, the condition of the church, the condition of the nation, our own condition. If we're going to shy away from facing the grit of things as God sees them, which, by the way, is a definition of what is truth.

What is truth? Not what we think it to be, but whatever it is as God himself sees it. If you return even to the first chapter of Isaiah, you have a beautiful picture of this. Israel is flourishing, but the prophet sees Israel as a city that has given itself over to adulterers, and the city of righteousness has been made a city of iniquity.

Its wine has turned to water. It's nothing but a shack, and he sees Israel spiritually. It's not a picture of the nation as they themselves see themselves.

It's the prophet seeing as God sees, through the apparent reality of things, to the truth of the situation, and communicating that seeing to a nation that would otherwise be deluded about itself. And that's why prophets were first called seers. We're not going to be speakers for God until we're first seers with God.

And that does not begin in that last moment's requirement when Israel's destiny is at stake. It begins now. And it's hard, saints.

Truth is hard. Truth is painful. But our God is the God of truth, and he will not meet us and act in any other place.

We cannot twist his arm. We cannot cajole him. We cannot ask his assistance to meet us on our terms and our conditions.

He'll meet us on the ground of truth, and that's why many of us are not met. That's why our condition languishes. That's why we remain in an unhappy condition year after year after year, because God is waiting for us to turn aside to see and to look into the burning bush and to see something, however painful for our consideration, as he himself sees it.

And what I'm finding in the opposition to this message are people who just don't want to see. Why did those who stoned Stephen put their fingers in their ears and ran upon him and gnashed upon him with their teeth? They did not even want to hear what he said. They want blood out, this man, his seeing, his hearing, his speaking, because it is so contrary to their view of things as they would prefer and desire it to be.

A prophet is a pain in the neck, and I'm being polite. He is an object of chagrin, of vexation to the world and even to the church and even to God's people. I'll give you an example.

It happened in Australia. It could happen anywhere. It wasn't even on my schedule, and I was invited to visit one of the renowned charismatic successors in this particular city in Australia.

And I came in, and the service had already started. I was on the platform, announced as the speaker, and they were having a ball. I mean talk about worship, talk about people rejoicing, and had every appearance of an overcoming, confident, positive expression of the Body of Christ, having it all together.

And there came a moment when the Lord flowed something, like the hands were in the air there, and it stopped. And I saw right through. I saw unhappiness.

I saw a sense of terrible inferiority. I saw people who were basically unhappy and unreconciled with themselves. You know the history of Australia.

The people that populated it were taken out of English prisons as a cheap labor source for a colony and have never gotten over that. And that's why Australia is such a macho nation, where they tattoo their biceps in crushed beer cans, and they've never gotten an image of themselves that has been freed from their origin of having been emptied out of debtors' prisons as the scum and scurvy of English society and have become the forced laborers in the colony, today called Australia. And that's what I was seeing, that something had been garnished over, that there was like a gilding of a charismatic kind of pseudo-happiness and excitement and joy that we can generate by our own instruments and by our own voices, but it was not the truth of their condition.

The truth of their condition was a deep-seated unhappiness, unreconciled lives, and then I was just hearing myself being introduced and had the choice of speaking to them on the basis of how they saw themselves and thought themselves to be, to go along with the flow, or to speak from the point of view of the prophetic seeing. Guess what I had to do. And when I started to describe to them their condition as I

saw it by the eye of the spirit, you could hear the proverbial pin drop, everything stopped, people stopped breathing, and there was a tremor of a moment when it could have gone one way or the other.

Either these people, without a signal, were going to rise up as one man and mob me and take my life for the insult that I dared to bring to suggest to them something about their condition, totally contrary to every appearance of things and every way in which they saw themselves, or they were going to fall before God that a moment of truth had come. There was that tremendous tension of something going the one way or the other, and their whole future was at stake, let alone eternity. So I can say with gratitude for the grace of God that they fell before the Word of Truth, that the anointing of God, the Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of Truth, so registered the truth of that condition that they acknowledged it.

There was a cry, there was a brokenness, like a whole congregational thing, something snapped, crackled, and popped right on the spot, and that night ended in joy unspeakable. Then there was worship, then there was rejoicing, then there was praise to God, for the moment of truth had come, and God was leading them in that truth that they would then accept it and see it as He sees it, and then He, because He has met them, His grace would be available to bring them to the place of true praise that would not be a charismatic fabrication. And so this is number one essential, where we go down into the valley.

The valley is a grim place. A valley is a depression, and it's not something that the flesh enjoys, and God begins by bringing His prophet down into that place and into the midst of it, round and about. That man's face was rubbed into the grit of Israel's death.

Try speaking that today in Israel, or anything like that, and the shriek and the howl will be phenomenal. People do not want to see. We're living a fool's paradise, a fool's dream.

There's so much fake, there's so much pseudo stuff going on. There's so much make-believe, there's so much pretense, where play act is in marriage, in society, and the church itself. So I'm happy for the way that this chapter begins, or else nothing subsequent would have followed.

What do you make of the question, Son of man, can these bones live? And what do you make of the answer, O Lord God, thou knowest? Why the question? Why does God say, can these bones live? Isn't everything possible to God? He's asking an ultimate question that maybe the prophet had already thought for himself, and God is reading his mind, and now articulating a question that the prophet himself was afraid to recognize. Can these bones live? Son of man. Why does he have to add that? Of course he's a son of man.

What is he, a robot? What is God getting at? Every syllable there is charged, pregnant with meaning. Even that reference to the prophet as the son of man. And what does that mean? Are we to be prophetic as the son of man? How are we both prophets and sons of men at the same time? And in fact, if we are not the one, we cannot be the other.

Can you be a prophet and not be a son of man? What does son of man evoke for you? That phrase itself. I know it so well. I'll tell you if you don't tell me.

Loyalty. Defect. Your humanity, your mortality, it haunts you.

It's with you always. And yet the ironic thing is, out of your mouth come God's very words, under the anointing. The oracle of God bearing the words of God.

You watch people stop breathing. You see them fall on their faces. You see great works of God out of the word that issues from your mouth.

And at the same time, you're conscious of your own very real humanity. If you can understand this, I'll never forget a young man that came up to me after meeting the Lord, the anointing of God. Powerful.

And this kid came up with white eyes. He said, Artie said, How does God use you like that? And how do you stay humble? I said, My dear brother, if you knew what was happening in my body right now, and throughout the entire message, you would know how I maintained humility. I was suffering from that terrible itch and ailment that requires preparation H for its remedy.

While I was speaking, it was going on. You still want to be a prophet? You know, we romanticize. We're terribly guilty of romanticizing.

Oh, a prophet and travel and all of the oracular statements and dealings of God. You need to factor in a prophet cannot be a prophet except he's also a son of man. Very much the son of man.

Very much sharing in the foibles, the failures, the fallacies, the defects, the weaknesses of those he addresses. He's required to bring a severe word, often a word of judgment. But it's got to be tempered by an awareness that he himself is capable of and has in fact experienced everything that God is now judging through the word that comes to others out of his mouth.

It's uncanny. It's strange. Lord, why can't I be a teacher? Why can't I be an evangelist? But this is eminently the paradox of the prophetic man.

Son of man, can these bones live? Why don't you just say, well, sure, of course. Lord, with you nothing is impossible. I know the credo.

I can recite the articles of the faith. How did he answer? He answered like a son of man. Lord, thou knowest.

How come he couldn't bring himself to a full statement of confidence in God that those bones could live? This is death with a capital D. I mean, this people is down and out. Your city shall be made desolate and ruins. The passerby shall come and say, look at this barren place where once this flourishing civilization had been.

They are dead, dead, dead. No hope. Utterly destitute.

This is as low as God can bring any people that even the prophet of Israel cannot believe for their restoration. If he was really truthful, he would have to say, no, I cannot believe that there can be a restoration out of this death. But he was being polite and saying, well, Lord, thou know.

Full of dry bones, and they were very dry, the text says, as if we needed that adjective to bring the point home. But I want to stress this point. Would you be able to prophesy to those bones with a faith that believes that they could live? And if you don't prophesy by faith, what is the value of your prophecy? Can anything happen except by faith? Without faith, it's impossible to please God.

And this is going to require a faith beyond our faith. This is beyond the capacity to believe. This is beyond not only charismatic believing, but even prophetic believing.

This is not only an ultimate statement about Israel's condition, it's an ultimate statement about the prophetic condition. God is requiring something ultimate. And the prophet that can find it, and the church of a prophetic kind that can meet it, is brought to a new ground of ultimacy.

Here's the genius of Ezekiel 37. Not only Israel's restoration, but something for the prophetic Son of Man people themselves. That in their obedience and the requirement forced upon them by Israel's condition, it can only be met in such a radically new way that they themselves are transformed in the process.

So God has two birds with one stone. Israel restored, and the prophetic people re-brought into a new dimension. I can't think of the word there.

Somebody help me. Transformed. Transfigured.

Transfigured by the very necessity and the requirement of what Israel's condition is. Let that sink in. Oh, the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God.

Who is not content either with Israel's condition, nor also the church, even at its best. And brings us to an ultimate crisis of faith beyond our own ability to perform. A requirement beyond even prophetic believing.

That if we find the key to the obedience that will fulfill it, we ourselves will be transfigured in the process. Which is exactly the intention of God. There's a dynamic relationship between Israel and the church.

One incomplete without the other, and the one acting as an agent toward the other. Even in Israel's unbelief, even in Israel's death, even in Israel's inertness, it is still playing a role. All the more because it's dead.

To summon something from the church, the Son of Man, people of God, that nothing else could have required of that ultimate kind. I won't be satisfied until you gasp. Until it breaks upon you.

Wow! The genius of this! My God! How clever! You never would have had a church come to a place of ultimacy, sufficient for its own millennial and eternal destiny, except that in the last stages of its own history on the earth, something is required of it, of so extraordinary a kind that it cannot even fulfill it, even on its own best basis. It's something beyond alone that will fulfill it. And who can identify what that something beyond is? You should instantly know it.

God has engineered a situation where only one factor alone can prevail and no other. This is either going to be a resurrection glory or all history stops. Israel remains in her grave.

The Lord remains restrained in the heavens. The kingdom does not come for the king cannot come. There's no restoration.

The church remains fixed at its charismatic plateau. Nothing is meeting the condition that will reveal the glory of God until this final and ultimate crisis that can only be met on the ground of resurrection. Israel's being raised must be a resurrection, but the means by which it is raised must also be a resurrection, even of the Son of Man.

If his word to Israel is itself not a resurrection faith, a believing beyond all believing of the kind that Abraham himself came to in his 99th year when he was as good as dead, what a remarkable conjunction between what brought Abraham into becoming the father of faith when, against all hope, Abraham believed against hope because God had spoken. When his body, now almost 100 years old, was as good

as dead. He hoped against hope.

He believed. He came to a resurrection faith despite apparent death. And that was the qualification that made him the father of faith and the father of all nations.

Am I describing your faith? Back to the drawing board. Where art thou, Son of Man? Are you in the charismatic mode or the resurrection mode? You want to know something? Until tonight, the charismatic mode sufficed. And nobody ever faulted you, and you made a brave show of it, and it was good.

But now you're moving toward a crisis of ultimate proportion where that will not suffice. You have got to become eminently the man of the resurrection whose faith is no longer his faith but the faith of the Son of God himself. Can you understand what God is structuring here, engineering here? We would have been satisfied to remain at the charismatic level.

I mean, it's heads and shoulders over what is fundamental and evangelical. It's got luster and life and excitement. From our point of view, it's great.

The meetings are better than they've ever been, better fellowship, better worship. When we measure from our point of view and the things that pertain to our satisfaction, what's wrong with that? We're not measuring from the point of view of his glory. Unto him be glory forever, says Paul.

Here's a radical shift from things as they have satisfied our requirement to things now as they will meet God's requirement. And except we come to that place in this life, are we fitted for millennial inheritance and ruling and reigning with him? You have no idea how deep-seated our egocentrism is. Reluctant, even spiritually speaking.

Come on, be honest. Come down into the valley. How do you measure anything, and even this school, and even tonight, or any other occasion, but by the way it affects you? We're locked into that.

It's in our corpuscles. Did you like the meeting? Did you like the fellowship? Did you like? Did you like? As if this is the principal predicate by which we weigh and examine anything. And so long as we remain in that place, and in that place we will remain, we have not graduated to the place for millennial participation and glory.

God sets something in the way at the very end of the church's history, and Israel's, that brings a new and ultimate requirement. And in order to bring the point home, God says, Son of man, can these bones live? No way. I have not a faith to believe for that.

And frankly, I'm not so sure that I even desire that those bones should live. They were a pain in the neck when they lived, and caused upheaval and distress and disturbance in the nations. You know, leave them.

It requires an identification with God and his purposes beyond ourselves. To see as he sees, to desire as he desires, to believe as he believes, and to love what he loves. If you have every one of these requisite things and have not love, you can forget your prophesying.

Even if you have the faith to believe, if it's not a faith that works by love, it will not work. And don't think that your present sentimental affection for Israel is that love. Just as your present faith is not that faith, neither is your present identification and affection that love.

This is altogether qualitatively something entirely other that is exclusively God. And one of the toughest things that you will need to die to if you're going to operate both in the faith and love of God is that affection that is now yours that you need to relinquish and give up and let go. Are you following me? Yes.

Which you so enjoy, your identification with Israel, and you love this people. And it's very real, and it's natural, and it's good. But it's not good enough.

Only the love of God is good enough. God is insisting upon himself ultimately for the church. And isn't it a remarkable irony that the thing that is good is the greatest deterrent to the thing that is perfect? It's nothing for us to give up evil, but try and do is to give up what's good.

My God will screech and howl and dig our heels in and fight and contest for that good thing. And by that, many of us have been kept from the perfect. We've enjoyed what's good, and it's familiar and dear to us.

But God is saying, relinquish. You give me your inadequate affection for Israel, which has subtle and umbilical attachment to your own soul and has, what's the fancy word in psychology, where something redounds to you while you're yet doing something for another? I'll think of it later. God sees perfectly.

Only priestly service will suffice here. And if it's not priestly, it's not going to be prophetic. And priestly requires the severest detachment from our own motivation and self-interest, or it's not a priestly service.

So Lord, this is so much of a tremor of your gratification, your identification with Israel, some romantic notion, some kind of thing where you get your kicks, there's some vibrancy. And who's to say that that must of necessity be mixed in? We are rendered numb and void in terms of a pure, priestly and prophetic service. A prophet is detached, even from himself.

When did God call Paul and Barnabas for the work? When do I call them? Separate unto me, Acts 13. He called men who were separated unto him because they were already separated unto themselves. How do you know that? Because you're just as content to remain an Antioch and to be in a place of worship as to be in a place of service.

There's nothing for you. There's no gratification in serving. It doesn't give you kicks.

It's not an excitement that you need because you're bored and you like to travel and meet new people and different faces and be used of God and enjoy the slap on the back that comes by, well done, boy I was really moved by that word. You've got to be so devoid of any need for the gratification that comes from men as well as their criticism, or you'll wilt under the one and be ruined under the other. This is priestly detachment.

And of all of the things in which we can be attached that offers subtle psychological and emotional and religious, what do you call the tiny roots that come out from a root? Tendrils. Israel is loaded. I don't know why it is.

There's something about Israel. There's something about the Jew, particularly for well-meaning Gentiles, that has a subtlety of such things with it. So there needs to be a separation from the good if we are to be the recipient and act out of that which is perfect, namely the love of God, the unconditional love of God.

Such a radical identification with God that you can't tell where the prophet ends and where God begins. That's why Elijah could say, as the Lord my God lives before whom I stand, this shall not reign nor do but

according to my word. Whew! Where does he get the chutzpah? Where does he get the arrogance to think that he can command the almost, this shall not reign but according to my word? He could say it with full confidence because his word is God's word and God's word is his word.

He has no word of his own. How would you like to come to that place? And what do you think it will take to get you there? Death. Exactly.

And not the death of vile things, the death of good things. Can you see the final and radical and ultimate requirement of God? Engineered through Israel's condition because nothing else will meet Israel's condition but the word of the Lord himself. His creative word, his word that created all creation.

He spoke and it was. It's the same word that must come now, but now it must be through your mouth. Son of man, go ahead and use the John before you do your prophesying and don't think that you'll not be sensible and conscious of that requirement.

It's remarkable that in the most lofty and spiritual moments your bowels are rumbling, your bladder is pressing, your stomach rumbles, you're a man! And what in here is a man? Unbelief. Fear. Insecurity.

What if I fail? Again he said to me in verse four, prophesy upon these bones. Isn't that interesting? Not even two, upon them. And say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.

It will come out of my mouth, but it will be the Lord's word. For only the Lord's word is the creative word, an event and an act that raises the dead and makes those things to be which were not. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, I will cause breath to enter into you, you shall live, I will lay sinners upon you, I will bring up flesh upon you, I will cover you with skin, put breath in you, you shall live, and you shall know that I am, is the Lord.

There's no knowledge like resurrection knowledge. It's one thing to know about resurrection, it's another thing to know it as the power that has raised you from the dead. That knowing is supreme knowing.

And if Israel does not know it, how shall it bless all the families of the earth? Can you see that? This is an extraordinary requirement for that nation. It's not enough to be Talmudic and rabbinical and to speak about God, which by the way is a distortion, for every idea of man about God is an error. Even our best ideas fall short of what God is as God.

Only the experience of being raised from the dead by His power conveys the knowledge of Him as what He is in Himself, the God who raises the dead. How many of us tonight have that knowledge of God? And what will it take for us to obtain it before they do? The resurrection of Israel from the dead first requires the resurrection of the church from its death, or we will not be to Israel what only a resurrected Son of Man company can and must be. And the whole issue, I feel like standing to say this, the whole issue of Israel's last day's restoration, which is the key to the release of the Lord pent up in the heavens, the coming of His kingdom, the whole redemptive program of God for creation, a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, is that restoration through Your Word.

Let that sink in deeply. The enormous stakes resting on our ability to prophesy to those bones in the power of the resurrection life. It's like a final put-up-or-shut-up.

Everything rests on that Word. And you could be so ever well-meaning and so much desire Israel's restoration, but if you're still on the other side of the resurrection ground and have not yourself passed

through that Jordan and descent unto death and are on the resurrection side, however well-meaning you are, your word is vain. The entire premium is on the church.

Israel is out of the picture. It cannot do anything for itself. God will not allow it.

That's exactly Israel's problem throughout its history. It's so able to do for itself, and that's why it had to be reduced to that condition where it is totally inert. How inert? Where they themselves recognize that we are cut off.

We are without hope. We are as dry bones. Verse 11.

Our bones are dried. Have you ever heard a Jew acknowledge that? Never. Let alone the nation.

They've got to be down and out. And it's got to be so registered upon them that they acknowledge the truth of their condition. And the moment that they do, what's the very next verse? Therefore prophesy and say to them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, O my people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves and bring you into the land of Israel, and you shall know that I am the Lord.

We keep hitting that. It keeps coming up again and again, and you shall know, and you shall know, and you shall know. Evidently, this is so important to him.

It's got to be. For how else shall Israel bless all the families of the earth except that they know that I am is the Lord? The very thing that offended Jews in the time of Jesus. Before Abraham was, I am, and they picked up stones to slay him.

How dare he equate himself with the God who spoke out of the burning bush, I am that I am. And moreover, this is my name throughout all your generations. They've got to know that the same Lord whom they've blasphemed and called the Mamza, Hebrew for bastard, is the God of Israel and the great I am himself.

After centuries of not knowing, they've got to know, and with a knowing that is beyond knowing. It's not in the mind. It's a knowing that has come into every cell of your being, and then you can make him known as he deserves to be known, as the God who raises the dead.

What a message to bring to a decimated Middle East and the survivors who have barely themselves come through the tremendous regional devastation that will come, and the nations and the whole broken condition of last days things and the judgments of God and the anti-Christ time. Here's a people going forth who can speak of a God who can restore from the dead. Because look at us.

We come to you as raised from the dead, and we're going to need a whole and entire eternity to thank the church for having been the instrument of our restoration. This same church that we despised, these goyim that we looked down on Moses and saw Jimmy Swaggart and Jimmy Baker and laughed and sneered and derided, the church will now take an eternity to thank you that you were a church of such a kind whose word was so God's that it raised us from the dead. Can you see what God is after? It's such a design that will glorify him forever.

But it begins with us. You know what I have to say about our present charismatic generation? We're trying to keep something alive that God is wanting to bring into the grave. Isn't there a new gimmick? We tried power evangelism, but that faded.

How about church growth? And if that doesn't work, what new gimmick? Something is wanting. We've lost the luster. This thing has become commonplace.

It's predictable. It's dull. Isn't there some way that we can keep it alive when if only we will let it come into the grave, God then will raise something out of that death that is eternally true and glorious.

And that's not only true for the church. That's true for us. That's true for our marriages.

That's true for our fellowships. It's true for us personally. We're trying to patch and keep something going.

God is waiting for a death and a relinquishing and a giving up of the good thing that he might raise that which is perfect. You shall know that I am the Lord when I have opened your graves. I shall put my spirit within you.

You shall live. I shall place you in the old man. Then shall you know that I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed it.

You mustn't miss the fact that God equates the speaking of the Son of Man as being his own. Then shall you know that I, the Lord, have spoken it. Shouldn't he be more careful with his words? Should he distinguish between the prophet speaking and himself speaking? It's not an accident and it's not missing the point.

It is the point that the prophet speaking is the Lord speaking. I wish I could say that every time I have to stand up before God's people, that if you hear me, you hear him. This is the word of the Lord without having to punctuate that.

And this is what God is wanting. How would you like God to bring you to a situation personally that you cannot meet on any other ground but the ground of his life and the only release for that life is your death? Would you welcome that? Say, Lord, I want so much to be, eminently, the man and the woman of the resurrection that I can say with for me to live as Christ. Bring me to a place beyond my own capacity to answer.

That the only answer that will answer, that can answer, is the answer of your life transmuted through me out of my death. What's the whole catch about resurrection? Why aren't people celebrating it more universally? Because it's always preceded by death. That's why.

And we have no stomach for dying. If only we could have the benefit without the dying. But we cannot, the life cannot be expressed except out of death.

So how many of us would welcome God engineering our circumstances to bring us to a place of such futility that we cannot meet it out of our human resource, however well-meaning, however religious, however spiritual, however intelligent. His life and his life alone. You say, oh, that's radical.

You know what I'm describing? God's normative intention for the Church, ever and always, under every circumstance. This is the faith! Why does it seem to us a novel and a radical thing? Because we have so long lived on the other side of resurrection. That's why.

It takes Israel's death to compel us to find the resurrection ground, to come in to that ultimate place where our word is God's word. And here we not only speak for him and speak as him and command the bones and the flesh and the sinner, but in verse 9 we prophesy to the wind, thus saith the Lord God, come from

the forewinds of breath and breathe upon these slain that they may live. I think it was in the first summer school that when we came to this place I had never seen it before or recognized it before, but what do you think that this means? It's one thing to speak to the bones, to join together, to put flesh on and sinner, but to command the wind.

Anybody have a Bible that has another word for wind? Breath. Whose breath is it? That alone makes something with God's breath. It's one thing to command bones, how would you like to command God? And until you command him, he's not going to release that breath.

Our boy, Lord give me grace that we're walking now over a tight wire, over a chasm, and one false step and we plummet down and lose everything. This is the final thing, to command the breath of God to breathe upon these slain. Would you have the audacity to do it? It's one thing to address the dead bones, but could you address God and command him? Breathe upon these slain that they might live.

Where's the first command? Verse 9. And where's the second one? Verse 10. And the breath came into them and they lived. Do you think you have a relationship with God where you can talk to him like that? And command him? Somewhere in Isaiah it says, according to the work of my hands, command ye me.

You think that there's something in God that is waiting for a people who would come to such a quality of relationship and unselfconsciousness that they could speak to God that way, and it would not be an affront to him, but that he would actually welcome it? I'm taking little careful steps like, what are you saying here? What are you getting at? What is this meaning? Would it be an affront? Would it be nervy? Would it be arrogant to speak to God like that? Or have we come to a place beyond arrogance, beyond conceit? Have we come to the kind of place where Paul came and said, follow me as I follow Christ? Where it sounds conceited and yet it's completely free of conceit because there's no self. There's no self-consciousness. There's no, how will it sound? How will it appear? There's no you.

You're so dissolved and merged in communion with God that he welcomes that. It's a statement of intimacy and of fellowship, of oneness with him himself, which has always been his desire, and the greatest obstruction to it has been our own religious and spiritual self-consciousness. It's a statement of a quality of relationship with God that I, you have to forgive me, I just can't find words.

I feel I'm intuiting something. My spirit is vibrating. I get a sense of what God is after that is so ultimate that I can't define it.

It's beyond any category that we've understood. We've been so long in the framework of, if God will help me then I'll do this. Isn't that what Jacob said? If God will help me in the way and give me food, and to again come to my father's house that I will then give him a tenth.

There's me and there's him. But there's God bringing us to a place where the distinction is dissolved and that there's a oneness with him as he is one. Where even you can command him and he's not at all offended as he was not offended when Elijah said, according to my word.

It's beyond self-conscious relationship with God. It's in a transcendent and heavenly place. It's ultimate.

And until we come to it, the breath doesn't come in. Wow! I mean there's a payoff here that is remarkable. Such an ultimate requirement, such a call of God that cannot be found except through death.

Death to our sentimental affinity for Israel, death to our present attitudes and what we think is appropriate, our categories, our view of God, our view of ourselves. There's so much that needs to die to come into a place that can only be obtained out of death which is the resurrection place and the place of speaking and the place of commanding and the key to Israel's restoration. I have never said those things in this way till now.

And do you think that the church is going to buy it? Are you going to buy it? Yeah. I'm willing to be this kind of a saint go this far no further because further than that is a requirement beyond what I want to contemplate or experience. Okay you lovers of Israel, if you'll not come to that place for your sake, will you come to it for Israel's sake? Okay you lovers of God, if you'll not come to it for your sake and you'll not come to it for Israel's sake, will you come to it for the Lord's sake, for God's sake? Because this eventuates in His glory forever.

Will you come to the place of the cross and the place of denial of self and the place of death to the good things that you want to keep alive that have functioned for you and have served your purposes till now but fall short of His glory? Here's what I have to say in conclusion. It is altogether voluntary and free-willing. You don't have to.

You can stay on the other side of Jordan. You don't have to go into that descent unto death to come up on the other side. It's a call.

You'll be the son of man, you'll be in the flesh, you'll be mortal until you're glorified. The ultimate thing that's being required is while we're yet sons of men conscious of our humanity and yet brought to such a place with God as Elijah himself knew who was flesh and blood like as we but it's the death where everything counts inwardly and internally of where we in fact really are and really live. We'll know it as death.

It's what God has always wanted but not by our wrenching not by our taking but by our yielding. It was always His desire that we should be as God but it comes not through presumption but through humility and through humility and humility is a going down unto death. Humus is the lowest form of organic life so God is finally obtaining what He's all along wanted but it would not have come except through the crisis of Israel.

All the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God who's been His counselor. You know one of the things that will save us from being jealous of Israel's restoration as the prodigal son who returns is that God has reserved for us a destiny yet more glorious than Israel's to rule and to reign with Him from heavenly places to ascend and descend upon the Son of Man to have a glorified body like as unto Him He calls us heirs and sons and co-heirs Israel will not have that privilege Israel will be in its natural physical body. It will be very much akin to where the church presently is.

A spiritual people in the earth operating in the earthly realm in conjunction for God but we our privilege, our communion, our relationship that requires a glorified body not just for the transition from to ascend from earth to heaven but to be in the presence of the Lord and not to be extinguished by the light of His glory to be in that precious communion I feel like I'm it's not even lawful to speak of such things but it's hinted at in this remarkable text that somehow the final key of which is the ability to command Him without a trace of arrogance conceit, usurpation self-exaltation because you have so become merged and in union with Him beyond your faith beyond your love His faith, His love, His ability to respond to command, His prophetic character and finally even to speak to Him in such a way as it does not offend Him it's from Him,

it's by Him it's to Him, it eventuates in His glory forever it's the end of the age it's the mystery of Israel and the church and we just need to pause and stop at this point and just let it sink in you contemplate that what would it take to bring me to a place like that and am I willing so to be taught so precious God, Jesus Lord mind-boggling mind-boggling what your intention is so beyond anything Lord that we could have considered you shall be as God and without presumption without pride, without arrogance of spirit because you yourself are God and at the same time are humble so we bless your name Lord and ask that through the night hours you would break up my God the earth, you would break up the clouds, you would sift this word my God through our spirits this great mystery this consummation and may it bring us a whole new awareness of yourself our call what the faith means what its consummation is forgive us my God for so long falling short of your glory forgive us for being satisfied with a place so much less than your intention forgive us even now my God for cowardice and reluctance to yield and to come my God to the place of your desiring that for us to live is Christ teach us what that means help us tomorrow to go over this ground and to glean it thank you Jesus for the word that you've appointed for this night, such a word such a reality thank you Lord

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