

K-540 One Church, One Body (1 of 2)

by Art Katz

Art Katz emphasizes the importance of understanding theology and the interconnectedness of Israel and the church in glorifying God.

Duration: 37:17

Scripture: Psalm 119:105, Proverbs 4:7, Ecclesiastes 12:13, John 1:1, Romans 15:4, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:20-21

Topics: "Body Of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of listening to the word of God with attentiveness and understanding. He acknowledges that his own statements are often packed with meaning and may require further unpacking. The speaker also highlights the influence of believers who have gone before us and are now in the realm of glory, exerting even greater influence than when they were on earth. He emphasizes that God is the God of the visible and invisible, and calls believers to align their perception with God's perspective. The speaker also criticizes the world's tendency to view the church as a secondary aspect of life, rather than the primary calling to which believers are called.

Transcript

Don't get scared by the word theologian, but this is a piece of theological reflection. Theo means God, ology is the study of. So of all of the things that men study, like biology and what other ologies are there? Psychology, geology, zoology, of all of the ologies, this is the supreme, theology.

And in fact, in Germany and in Switzerland, there are no separate faculties for theology as in America. Theology is a department of the university and the ministers are trained in the university. And theology was considered the queen of the sciences.

I don't know about the word science, but maybe we would say the queen of the disciplines because it requires and draws from all of the others. Theologians are men of an immense breadth of learning and they bring to their study an examination of the scripture, philology, the study of language and history. They want to get to the original setting and understand what the mentality was of the people to whom the scriptures were first given.

And I know that a lot of it has become warped and a humanism has come into much of modern theology, but that's no reason to disown or to discredit the whole of it. So for me, it's been a source of personal delight and insight and I just want to share a little reflection from Karl Barth on Israel and the church. But I

have this sense that a lot of what we're suffering personally is for the want of an embracing, an understanding and embracing of the things that are central to God, the ultimate things and the eternal purposes of God.

And for the absence of those considerations, we have become so bent in and turned in upon ourselves, contemplating our navels, feeling our pulses. We're so totally subjective and measure everything by how it affects us because we have not a center. The true center is the preoccupation with what is central to God, the things that pertain to his eternal purpose and glory.

I have never ceased to marvel that when invitations for healing are given at full gospel meetings and in other places, the line is immense. What have God's people to do with being that sick? Why are they so full of ailments and come back again and again? They're healed and come back again and again because I think that the sickness has largely to do with our lives being lived from a false center. And that opens the door to every kind of malady.

So my approach to wellbeing is not to heal the soul, but to restore the missing center, the eternal purposes of God, of which and especially in the last days, Israel is at the heart. So you need to be reminded, we're not taking this up because I'm Jewish. We're taking this up because it is central to God and the great Jewish apostle Paul, at the conclusion, I'm never weary of telling you, nine through 11, his great systematic statement gives the whole purpose for it in, of him and through him and to him are all things to whom be glory forever.

The issue of Israel is not the issue in itself. It's only a means to the greater issue, the glory of God forever. And if ever we lose that focus, we'll have a distortion and a warp in our entire Christian life.

And I believe that has happened to a great many who are fascinated with Israel and have made Israel the end in itself, rather than a means to the greater end, the glory of God. So if you have that as your framework, you're able to receive this little jewel and get an understanding of what theological reflection is and that God himself invites us to be theologically minded and you don't have to be professional to be it. Paul was preeminently kingdom oriented, that we see he exhorted the church to walk worthy of the kingdom and the glory to which we are called.

You notice the complete absence in Paul of any particular attention to the psyche, to inner healing, to attention to that kind of thing that is so much the theme of much of Christian literature and preoccupation today. It would have been totally outside his whole ken, his whole perception of things. He was a man and the foundational man and the chief apostle preoccupied with the kingdom, which is to say the glory of God.

God is glorified when after 2000 years of human rebellion or longer than that, his rule is again established in his creation through the nation that has been the most rebellious and most opposed even to its own calling has opposed itself in its stiff necked opposition to him, but faithful God of the covenant that he is despite them, he will yet prevail because he has spoken, because he has called, because he has given gifts and callings, because his name is at stake, his honor is at stake. Not for your sake do I do these things, he reiterates, but for my holy name's sake. The issue of Israel's restoration is the issue of God's holy name.

How then there we think ourselves the church and not to be preoccupied with what he has appointed as the means of restoring his name and his credibility to a universe that blasphemes him everywhere. See, so this issue of Israel is not some little narrow ethnic consideration. It's the very issue of God and his glory

forever.

Therefore, it deserves our attention. So if the enemy has in any way been whispering to you, we're majoring in the mind is look, I'm hurting, I need this, I need that, and here we're talking about Israel. Let's deal with me first, then I'll be able to deal, no.

Deal with God first, take to heart his purposes and you'll, how does it say in the course as we, in the sight of his glorious face, the cares of the earth grow strangely dim. They finally dissipate away, they're not there. So now don't flip out and don't get intimidated and threatened if this gets a little highfalutin.

Karl Barth, B-A-R-T-H, is now dead, died in his 80s, Swiss theologian, but he began as a simple village preacher in one of the cantons of Switzerland. And he was a man for the word and the preached word. And so starting from that place of having an obligation to bring a living word to his hearers, he was brought into the reflection on the word and into the realms of theology itself, was a professor, profound teacher, an opponent of Hitler and a giant in the 20th century.

He's likened with men like St. Augustine, Calvin, Paul himself. So I have greatly benefited from the little examination that I've been able to give some of his writing. And this is a selection from his church dogmatics, his systematic examination of the word of God that runs to about 10 or 12 volumes.

Each one is about 39 bucks. I'd like to have the whole set one day if you're thinking of a little something to give. I've got one volume that I obtained years ago.

And when I came back from the last overseas trip, the Lord said, Karl Barth. And I said, don't I have one of his books on church dogmatics? And I picked it up and it was bye-bye baby. I was transported into other realms.

And this is one selection from that book in which he discusses the church in two aspects, the church militants and the church triumphant. The church militant is the church in the earth. Isn't that interesting to see it from the perspective of a militant company that gives us a strategic purpose for being.

The church triumphant is the church that is invisible, the cloud of invisible witnesses that has already passed on into the realm of glory. And he has a view of the interaction between the church and its two segments, so to speak, that I've never before heard expressed. It's a reflection and it gives a wonderful way of apprehending the glory of what the church is.

In which he says that the church that was already belongs to the sphere of completion, but the dead no less than the living have a part in the communion of the saints. It is not only the living who speak and act, but their predecessors, their words and works, their history does not end with their departure, but on their departure, often only then enters into its decisive stage among their successors. Did you get that? You see how we're required to hear with an acuteness that the world's babble does not require.

We were just talking on the way down here about my article on priesthood and the row and Joe was saying that they didn't want it to end. And we're talking about the way that I express myself. I said, somebody needs to follow up after me and unpack my statements.

And I myself don't realize how concentrated and compacted they are that the average believer is not trained to hear a statement that is so replete with meaning. Usually we hear a lot of wind, a lot of blah, blah, blah, blah, and anecdotes until we finally get a little, the germ of the message that we have to

wait for patiently until finally it gets through in a long barrage of words. I'm the kind of guy that goes right for the jugular vein.

And if you're not attenuated to that, you miss it. And Bart is very much the same. This statement is a remarkable statement that those that have come before us that are already gone on in the realm of glory have a greater significance in having gone on for the present than when they were here.

That when a saint dies, his work is not finished, but there's a sense in which as one who has gone onto glory in the invisible cloud of witnesses, he exerts a present influence even more valid than when he was alive. I shared this with Betty Long in Sacramento. I ran down to the desk of the hospital where she was likely dying, although she survived yet again and again and again and had this Xeroxed for her.

And I was just gonna leave it with the desk and Alyssa said, well, bring it up. And I brought it up and I went over this with her. And it was so exhilarating for her, so encouraging that if she passes, it's not that she can no longer be an intercessor on my behalf, but yet a more powerful factor from the heavenly realm than even was true of her in the earthly.

See, we are so compartmental, secular and sacred, alive and dead, the profane and the sacred, the eternal and the present. Those are not God's categories. Everything is the eternal now.

Karl Barth was a dialectical theologian. Now, what does that mean? He saw everything in an act of flux. One of the ancient Greek philosophers said, you cannot step into the same river twice.

Maybe the same name, but the water is continually moving. Everything is in flux, there's a dynamic of life. There's an interaction, there's a dialectic between past and present and future.

There's a continual moving that makes life life. But we are taught to see in static categories, male and female, yes and no, black and white, heaven and hell, you know. I know that those things exist, but there's a way in seeing them as God sees them in more of a flux and flow that is more the truth of the reality of what those words designate.

So what is he seeing? That those that have passed on are not a static thing. Well, they're gone. They were once with us, now they're, no.

They have moved into another realm of being and from that realm, they're exerting an influence into the church in the present that was perhaps more significant than when they were part of that church in this life. Now that they have gone on to be the church triumphant, they exert an influence to the church militant that is part of God's dynamic and it altogether constitutes the church. If you see the church only as the present phenomenon in the earth, the living members, and don't see the role of the invisible cloud of witnesses that have passed on but are present in the spiritual dimension, you don't see.

And the church suffers from an inadequate perception of itself. There's a chronic hangover, a negativism, an inferiority complex which the world loves, by which we would see the church as a Sunday institution and not understand it's a glory that God has created all things in order that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God might be demonstrated to the principalities and powers of the earth. The church is God's masterpiece and that's us, we are it.

How dare we have a niggardly view of it and that will be reflected upon ourselves and not have the lofty understanding of what a sublime creation the church is for which the Lord died. He gave himself for the

church and continues to wash it by the water of his word. And it will be to him an eternal bride.

It's the bride of Christ without spot, without wrinkle. It's the bride coming down from heaven adorned for the bridegroom having the glory of God. If this once enters your spirit, what place is there for you to have the arrogance and the conceit to look upon your own inferiority, your own hangups and your own this and your own that when you're called to the ecclesia triumphant.

That's the Latin, the triumphant church, the called out ones. So may you adjust your brain box. May you come into the perception of the thing as God himself sees it for that alone is true seeing.

And understand that that seeing is contended against by a world that wants to make, quote the church, a Sunday addendum with programs for Sunday school and for your children where you're married and buried and you give your dollar in a collection plate and make that only a secondary aspect of your life rather than the primary thing to which you are called and that goes on into the realm of eternity. I don't know how you guys can hear things like this and not take notes. I would have to, I couldn't remember.

I would wanna catch, I'm not gonna take every word of the speaker but I wanna catch a phrase here and a reference and go back over it later and then it revives the memory of what was spoken, which is a skill to which you're called. And I wanted to say this, everything about the faith and its theological content is calculated to bring us to a place of transcendence. I think I said to some kid who wanted to be a lawyer, oh, you wanna be a lawyer? Study the scriptures.

You want to sharpen your intelligence and your capacity for reasoning and analysis and then compare scripture with scripture. The whole of mankind has been lifted up and ennobled by virtue of the dissemination of the Bible. There was no literacy until the Bible came.

One of my precious friends in Yugoslavia, Peter Kuzmich, PhD, wrote his doctoral dissertation on the influence of the Bible in establishing the modern Croatian and Serbian languages. There were German, modern German is the result of Luther who took the Latin and Greek and Hebrew and made a modern German Bible. Modern German is the result of that labor.

And probably more than we know the English language is the result of those who did the same and brought the scriptures into secular languages. There's something about the word of God that is a benefit. It promotes intelligence.

It promotes total humanity to reflect on a subject as noble as the word of God must have benevolent consequence for those who will give themselves to it. And here we are letting the dust gather and turning to popular science and mechanics today and the Life Magazine and other junk when the word of God is so rich and it invites our investigation and you'll never come down where you were before by having given yourself to it. This is a noble man.

He's been ennobled by his investigations of the word. And I'm sure the fact that he lived to almost 90 years of age and was clear almost to the day of his departure is the life that came into his body and his bones and his organs and his mind, his sinews and every aspect of his physical being by the word of God that was continually coursing through him. That's what he was.

He was a theologian. So also ought we to be. This is his reflection.

The fact that it's not nailed down in scripture is not unusual. The Lord is often silent about certain areas of mystery. And this is where theological reflection is taking what is said.

What can be understood by that? And it's not offered as a thus saith the Lord, here it is all nailed down. Here's something to contemplate and to have a perception of something that is hidden and is likely being brought to light by the investigating and the weighing and the examining of a subject. So hear it in that light.

It's not a thus saith the Lord, it's a reflection. But it's a profitable reflection, has been for me. And well, let me just read this and you guys can weigh it up.

Barth begins his discussion by considering the church as being comprised of the Ecclesia militans and the Ecclesia triumphans. The militant church in the earth, the triumphant church that has already departed, but who constitute the cloud of witnesses about us. The first is still gathered and builds itself up and lives by its mission.

The others did so in past days or centuries so that it already belongs today to the sphere of completion. They're already in the glory, so to speak, not in their bodies. I don't understand all of this because the bodies will in the day of the Lord be raised from the dead, but their soul in whatever makes the cloud of witnesses invisible, they're there in actuality.

But the dead no less than the living have a part in the communion of the saints. It is not only the living who speak and act, but their predecessors, their words and works, their history, which does not end with their departure, but on their departure, often only then enters its decisive stage among their successes, standing in an indissoluble relation with the present, whether we are aware of it or not. The church triumphant is with Christ, with him, the head of the body.

It takes part in the glory, which is still hidden from the militant church because it is with him in the midst of it actively and not merely passively engaged with it. It waits for the completion of the whole. That's why they're not complete without us.

And he says it impels toward its completion. So he's suggesting that the invisible cloud of witnesses, that is not yet complete without us, is not merely a spectator to us, but being in the realm of glory and the things that are yet not attained or only partially seen by us, exert a kind of an influence in bringing us to that completion because they are joined to the same head. This is a critical point because we're gonna go from this discussion of how the church is comprised of the present and the living and those that have passed on and both are connected together as one body, one church through the head.

They are alive unto the head from the invisible realm. We are alive from the earthly present realm to the same head. We're connected to the head.

He's the God of the living. There's a connection and a continuum of both what is invisible and visible, what is past and what is present, because he is the head and we are all joined to that head. And that is what comprises the church.

It's a view of the church that I like. And then I'll show you in a moment, we'll go from that to his view of Israel and the church equally joined to each other through the head. There was not yet conscious of that connection.

The Israel today does not yet saved and even in opposition to God has a relationship to him whom we call Lord, who's the head over the church, but it's also it's Messiah. So he's fastening on the head and shows a connection in the same way that the church is connected to the invisible cloud of witnesses because they are related to the head. The church is also related to Israel because it is related to the one who is head for us, who is their Messiah and has a way then of seeing the relationship between the church and Israel that is not common and I think is a refreshing view.

This means that a saint who has taken, who has gone on, is not lost to the purposes of God, but rather continues from another sphere to be engaged in his purposes as much as, or as significantly, at least as before. So therefore the enemy cannot win. This has helped me because you wonder how precious saints who have gone on, like your father or Bart himself or Paul, what a loss, why couldn't they have lived longer and continued to have contributed? It's not a loss at all.

They're continuing to contribute, but only from another sphere and realm of activity in the realm of the invisible, Moses and Elijah. They're conferring with Jesus on his deceased on what steps will be taken and why they're taken that completes his own earthly life. So, because they are already in the realm of glory and that is to say they're in the eternal realm where God is and they know what's to come, so to speak, and they're encouraging, they're exerting an influence.

We don't know what their conversation was, but they didn't come just to say hi. They perform something in their coming. They were an actual conversation with Jesus, bringing to him who was in the present realm something from the realm of glory, which is to come.

But what God did was make them visible in their glorified state that Peter and the other two went down as dead. But how much of that continues on, but is not seen, like even now. We now are encircled by a cloud of invisible witnesses, giving us an assist and exerting something from the realm of glory into our present because they know our dogged unbelief, our cynicism, our earthly brain boxes that resists this fear of the phantasmal, the invisible, that in a sense, they are as present with us as Elijah and Moses were with Jesus, but we're not being privileged to see them.

And because I'm on the cutting edge, I hope this doesn't sound vain, because I told the Lord long ago, however much I would have made a candidate to be the Jewish Billy Graham of modern times, no thank you, but reserve me, Lord, for your purest, truest, final end of today's work. And I know that God has answered that prayer. I see it again and again by where he brings me.

And I'm even so presumptuous as to say to those people, I know that God has an eternal destiny for you and profound purpose, because if it was not so, I would not be here. I know that where I am, God's ultimate, truest purposes are being performed. And if that's true, I need an assistance of a particular kind.

And there are times, and I think it was in that first night in France in Albi where this precious young man comes from, that those, that cloud of witnesses was present, because the message was, do you saints here know that those who shed their blood in this locality are present with us tonight, that something is being struck tonight, whose time has come, a historical moment has come to galvanize you and bring you into a conscious continuum of those who preceded you. What you don't know is, but that they knew and needed to be reminded of the Albigenses who perished at the hands of the Catholic church in the 12th and 13th centuries in a bloody massacre who were pre-reformation reformers, who wanted to return to the epistolic scriptures, who came out from under the heavy hand of the Catholic church and were mercilessly decimated. The cathedral in Albi is a fortress.

I'll show you pictures. It's not at all what you think of as a Gothic cathedral. It was built as a fortress.

Why? To quell the spiritual uprising that was taking place where 90% of the farmers and the ordinary people that lived in the area of Albi were moving away from the Catholic tradition and wanted to return to apostolic reality. And so in order to impose upon them their authority, they built the cathedral as a fortress. And so they took the bishop's palace where the saints were tortured in the basement or in the attic and make this the art museum.

And so there's something about mankind that blots out the history of the past. And you have to almost fight for and contend for the history that the world wants to bury, which is significant for our present understanding. Well, anyway, I'm getting exhausted before I get started.

That night in Albi, God was restoring the remembrance of the saints to the blood that was shed in their own locality, not only in the 12th century, but later again in the 17th century when the church then attacked the Huguenots in that area. That area in Southern France is famous for its history of persecution. But the present saints who are not living in the consciousness of that, nor do they see themselves in being in continuum.

And that seeing can get your head knocked off because to consciously identify yourself with that is to announce to the powers of the air that I am in connection with those saints who preceded me. I know that they were not complete, that the things for which they suffered and died yet wait fulfillment through me. And I announce by that identification that I'm giving myself to that fulfillment.

And therefore I open myself to your opposition that the same reason you hated them, you will now hate me. See what I mean? It's no cheap thing. We're not talking about little kiddie stuff here.

And I don't think that the church is the church until it comes into this consciousness. And this is part of the ministry of restoration that the church is going to be a glory, not only in this age, but of the ages to come. It needs also to embrace its past as well as its future.

And why am I feeling already now an exhaustion? It's a drain to revive these things that the enemy wants to keep down and out because he knows that you'll only be hitting on two cylinders rather than four. If you don't come into this complete consciousness that the church is only the church in the totality of both realms, triumphant and militant as one united with a single head. But if we don't see it, the people perish for the want of vision.

But that understanding being lost to us diminishes what church is in our own understanding and our place in it. I tell you that I feel that my whole role in the church is profoundly enhanced as one to whom the baton is being passed on from those that have gone before me. Do you know what I mean? To see myself in a living continuum with that past heightens my present.

And that's normative. God intends that as normative. And in the absence of that, we have subscribed to a cheap beggarly view of the church as only a Sunday addendum and it shows.

And we have given ourselves to claptrap and to nonsense that is unbecoming a church that is constituted by the church triumphant and the church militant as being one in the head and moving toward a destiny and a conclusion for which we need their assist. The head is the vital source of life to the body and that they are connected to that head. And we also from the visible plane is a whole remarkable concept that we need to see, though it's invisible.

We do not have an adequate apprehension of the church and the glorious phenomenon it is if we see only from the visible and earthly plane. And that the head is the linkage because all live unto him. Paul says, whether we live or whether we die, we live or we die unto him.

It changes the whole concept of death. Death then is not the disaster. It's not a termination.

It's just a shifting of the sphere of operation. And even more remarkable is that that sphere may well be more significant than this sphere. But whether it is or it isn't, it's at least as vital and the two together comprise reality.

Comprise, not compromise, comprise reality. It's a whole phenomenal view. And once you get a taste of this, you're opened for the spectrum of reality, which is God's.

You begin to see how stunted you were in your view, narrow and your fear of death goes up like a puff for death is not a calamity. It's a promotion. It's moving into that realm where you continue to express your vital concern for the glory of God and the completion of things to which everything is tending to the consummation from just another sphere.

And it's God who determines how long you operate in the one and when you come into the other. There's no loss, there's gain. And so the devil thinks he's having a field day and making martyrs of the saints.

That dumb sap doesn't realize he's aiding the very thing that he hates and wants to oppose by releasing the saints from their mortal bodies and bringing them into the realm of the invisible by which they continue to exert even yet greater influence than when they rattled him on the earth in their bodies. You can't beat God. He's the God of the living, of the things visible and the things invisible.

And what is the final consummation? When the Jerusalem from above comes down over the Jerusalem that is below. When there's no longer spheres of separation or distinction and now it's all one and he is all in all. But we can at least have a foretaste to see the reality that's already true, though invisible.

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