

Message to a Secular University Audience

by Art Katz

God loves the world and has sent His Son to save a selfish mankind, offering eternal reward to those who choose to serve Him.

Scripture: Psalm 22:27-28, John 3:16-21, Acts 17:26-27, Romans 1:16

Topics: "The Nature of God", "Universal Salvation"

Description

Art Katz addresses a secular university audience, emphasizing that Christianity is not a narrow faith but a universal truth for all nations. He highlights God's love for the world, the necessity of seeking Him, and the importance of making a choice regarding faith in Jesus Christ. Katz shares his personal journey from skepticism to belief, illustrating the transformative power of God's Word and the call to come into the Light. He warns against the dangers of sin and the consequences of rejecting God's offer of salvation, urging listeners to recognize the eternal significance of their decisions. Ultimately, he calls for a commitment to God above all cultural and national identities.

Transcript

You may think that Christianity is derived from a Jewish foundation in religion, and that it is some narrow faith restricted to those who are Jews or Westerners, but that is not true. There is only one God, one faith, and one way for all men and for all nations. Let's begin in the Gospel of John, and to read this familiar scripture in a new way. John chapter 3 verse 16: For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Here is the way we need to read this: For God...That is where this begins. God loves. He is not an abstract deity; He is not the projection of our imagination; He is not the one that we can form in our image. There is a God who is God, and He is a God who loves. For God so loved the WORLD...Aren't you happy for that? The world includes every nation under the sun. God so loves the WORLD. He made it! It's His! The earth is the Lord's! He loves what He has created, and He says that: He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us (Acts 17:26-27).

Why has God made the nations? Why are there boundaries? Why are there specific languages and nationalities? God has established the world and its configuration, not for the purpose of commercial success, or the advancement of culture, but that we might seek after Him and find Him. God so loved the

world. He was not under any obligation to create the world. China does not need to exist, nor the United States, or France, or Germany. He could have enjoyed Himself without the nations.

He could have lived exclusively within Himself and with His Son and Spirit. But He chose to create the world, and to establish mankind and the nations, so that they could find Him, so that they could be in relationship with Him, so that He could put His Spirit within them and give them a relationship with the living God that will affect and change everything. God so loved the world that He gave His Son on the cross. In a point in time, God allowed His Son to suffer an incredible torture and death by men who were opposed to what He represented.

This Son of God threatened their religion and culture. They wanted to keep and preserve their narrow enjoyment of their own religious culture and interest. This is the conflict that has always existed throughout all the ages. Though God created the world and the nations, the nations have become proud, autonomous and self-sufficient. They have taken their piece of earth as if it was their own, and sought to pursue their own pleasures and interests. These pursuits have inevitably brought them into conflict with those nations that border their nations and who threaten their interests.

The result has been conflict, war, bloodshed, violence, and death. God never intended that nations should be gods unto themselves. So He has sought to make Himself known to all nations. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe is judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God (John 3:17-21). The word world is mentioned four times. In other words, we are not talking about some narrow national religion, appropriate to Westerners. God's Light is for the world, and when He brings that Light into the world, men are required to make a choice.

No culture can hold back the Light of God that comes when God sends men to bring the word about His Son. It is this Son who has made possible a salvation, that if you believe in Him, though it is contrary to your upbringing, culture and understanding, something is required from you in making a decision with regard to Him. Before I became a believer in Jesus, the Son of God, I was offended by any narrow insistence of one way and one faith. I much preferred the easier and less demanding "many paths to truth."

Growing up in New York City, the issue of sin was never pressed into my consciousness. Sin keeps us from God. Sin is selfishness; sin is putting yourself first; sin is being concerned only about your career and advancing yourself. You may make room for someone who will help you in your way so long as it serves your interest. Sin is putting your interests before God's interests. Sin is seeing yourself as being your own lord, your own god--as if your decisions and your choices are the supreme and the ultimate thing.

Sin is living a life in complete indifference and rejection to the God who made the world and the nations. Sin is never taking God into your consideration. The end of that selfishness is corruption, violence, war and death. God sent His Son to save a mankind that is selfish. God loves the world and has sent His son into the world that no one need perish. Perish is different from dying, and suggests something more than the end of your natural physical life. Perish suggests that there is an eternity, a time beyond this life.

Perish suggests that if you make wrong decisions about God in this life, you will be cut off from the Light of God and the fellowship with God for all eternity. Our natural lives are only for a moment. The only reason that we exist is that we might be given an opportunity within this life to say "yes" or "no" to God. This alone will decide the issue of our eternal future. Everything that is in the world is opposed to our understanding this concept of reality. Everything that is in this world wants you to believe that the prime purpose of life is to find your success in the world.

But God has established the nations, and every people, and given them breath, that they may seek after Him and find Him. In other words, God has created the world and the nations for one purpose--that He might be found, that He might be discovered, that men might know Him. What about Buddhism? What about Confucianism? What about Hinduism? What about Islam? Aren't these all valid religions of an equal and comparable type? No, not at all. These are human and even satanic attempts to draw men away from God.

We carry a strange message that is very narrow and very absolute--one God, who is the creator of the nations, and has sent His Light into the world in the form of His Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish. This message does not make room for other views. It insists upon itself as the only truth and the only Light. In a world that prefers a pluralistic and relativistic view, this message is an offense. Yes, it is a narrow view; yes, it is absolute; yes, it says there is only one way.

But this message is "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek [Gentile nations] (Romans 1:16b)." There is something in the message itself that conveys the power and authority of God in order that you might believe in Him who came down from Heaven to suffer death on the cross--the most painful and humiliating execution known at that time. But in this suffering of that death, like a lamb going to the slaughter, His blood was shed.

Because of that, whosoever senses that they are not clean, that they cannot come before the presence of a Holy God, in believing Him, receive the benefit of the blood, which He shed, and their sin that offends God is removed--even two thousand years after the event of the crucifixion. ...He [God] has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead (Acts 17:13). Many will be fearful for that day.

It is the Day of Judgment for the unbelieving. The world and all who have ever lived will be judged for their refusal to receive the Light, for their choosing to continue in their darkness, for their unwillingness to humble themselves and to surrender to this one God, who alone is the Creator and the coming King. No man will stand before Him with excuse, for this word of the gospel will have gone out to all nations throughout the earth. It says that when the gospel shall be proclaimed to all nations, then will the end come.

And God is sending men to the nations to call out a people for His name. You are at this university, not for a career, nor for your education, however important that might be. The real purpose why God has brought you here may well be that you may hear His Word, and receive His Light, and be saved. The message of God is everywhere in His Word. We read in Psalms 22: All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will worship before You.

For the kingdom is the Lord's (vv. 27-28). When we hear the word of God, there's a choice that needs to be made, and a decision that is called for. God has come into the world through His Son, that if we believe in what the Son has said of Himself, and what he has performed, and what He has allowed men to

understand of Him, we shall be saved. At the age of 35, I was a self-made man. I saw myself as the product of my culture, my nationality, and my Jewish, American upbringing.

I could not help but become a Marxist. It was the logic of my life lived in that generation. I was formed by the environment I lived in. But, on May 26, 1964, I bowed before God and had to say "yes" or "no" to Him. I was asked to call upon the name of the Lord; I was asked to receive the Light that had come to me in the first reading of the Bible, aboard the deck of a ship, on my way from Italy to Greece. I had never read the Bible before that day. For me, the Bible was for the weak and ignorant.

For me, no one book can say all the truth; there were many bibles and many religious books. But I did finally open the Bible. And at the very first reading, Light from Heaven came into my soul in one statement, out of the mouth of Jesus, "Let him, who is without sin, cast the first stone." I was a student of history and a teacher of history. I was trained in the analysis of documents. But this document was unique, different from any that I ever before had read. There was a power and an authority in it.

That statement of Jesus came up off the page, and into my eyes and brain and down into my heart like a sword. It cut me in two. I was trembling, because I heard the Word of the Lord. I had received Light from Heaven, through the Word out of the mouth of Jesus. I was completely astonished and taken by surprise. And my first thought was, "What is my mother going to say about this?" But if we put our mothers before God, we will remain in darkness. Nor will we be of any value to them.

I was not going to be stopped by the thought of my mother, my Jewish culture or nationality, but only the truth of God that is revealed. Because of that, there is now hope for my culture, for my Jewish community, for my mother and for the nations. We have got to bow before God and have no other gods before Him. However, I did wrestle against the God who revealed Himself to me in His Word. I did not want to become a Christian. I did not want join the Christians. I reasoned, "I am a Jew.

Christians have persecuted us. How can God ask me to be one?" And I wrestled with this God for weeks, with this little book in my hand. I finally came to Israel and was put up in the Hebrew University dormitory. I was given books to read and professors with whom to speak, to save me from becoming a Christian. The last thing for me was to visit a Chasidic Jewish Community. And I said, "Yes, by all means, anything to save me from this unwanted predicament of having to become a Christian."

And they put me on a bus and I never got to where I was supposed to go. They put me on the wrong bus, and I was going around in circles in Jerusalem. Finally, I got out, and went into a store for directions. The woman in the store made me a little map. I was just about to leave, when I realized I was in a bookstore. I took a closer look at the books. There were Bibles and Christian commentaries. I turned to look at the woman's Jewish face and asked, "What is this place?" "Oh," she said, "this is our bookstore adjoining our chapel.

We are a congregation of Jewish believers in the Messiah Jesus." In that moment, a voice that called me by name, and knew me, said, "Art, you are not to leave this place." I had been a Marxist communist and a radical rebel all my adult life. I had never submitted to any authority. But when I heard the voice of Him with whom I have to do, calling me by name, and commanding me to stay, I obeyed Him. I stayed there for four days and nights with these Jews, who were worshipping God.

I saw Jews with their hand outstretched before God, and praising Him in the name of Jesus. And as the hands went up, I saw on some of them the tattooed numbers of the concentration camps of the Nazi time.

Didn't they suffer in a Christian German nation? But they were worshipping God, and they were opening to me their Bibles, and kept sharing with me for four days. And yet, my mind could not understand what they were trying to show me and tell me. The Bible says that the natural man cannot understand the things of God, for they are spiritual.

You will never come to God by the operation of your mind, for that would only be your proud accomplishment. You can only come to God, in response to His Word, because His Word is sent to you by His Spirit. Unless you hear it, you have no faith to respond. God is the author of your salvation, and gives you the ability both to hear and to respond, that no man should boast. His salvation is a gift. On my last night, I went to sleep completely confused. "How can God ask me, a Jew, to be a Christian?"

How shall I join the 'enemy'? This is not for me." In my sleep, when my mind could not interrupt, God bypassed my mind and gave me an understanding directly in my heart. And I woke up on May 26, 1964, believing. I went to bed an atheist, and I woke up the next morning believing the foolishness of this gospel, and that Jesus is who He claimed to be. The lady, who was hosting me said, "Art, you need now to call on the name of the Lord and pray." I said, "I have never prayed. The name of Jesus is for me a blasphemy.

It is an angry curse word, and I can't speak it in a kind way." But God gave me grace to call upon His name. And in the moment that the name came out of my mouth, I was saved. God's Word is true. He said that whosoever calls, from any in the nations, shall be saved. There is not a place in the earth where I have been, that I have not found the people of God who have called on His name. The earth is the Lord's and the nations. He loves the world. He gave His Son, and whosoever in the world shall believe on Him, needs not perish, but has everlasting life.

I know better than you that the issue is eternity. I want to see you saved from having to perish, to be cut off from God, to be removed from Him permanently. There is no second chance once the day of eternity comes! Light has come to the world. And many have refused the Light. They didn't want the Light because the Light is too revealing, too exposing. They prefer the darkness of their culture, their nationality, and their traditions, but they will perish because they refused to come to the Light.

So, I invite you to come to the Light. Jews have had to face these questions, and still face them. "Choose ye this day whom you will serve." There is a choice. Out of myself, without anything that had to do with my background, my circumstances, my heredity, my Jewish upbringing, I, the essential Art Katz, in a point of time, had to say "yes" or "no" to God in Christ. I had to choose. It is the moment of supreme freedom in life or death with God. That same moment is before you now.

May the same grace come to you as came to me, because my whole culture, my whole upbringing, my whole nationality was opposed to this message. It was too narrow, it was too absolute, it was too different. To be in relationship with God is costly. But the eternal reward is great. Every soul that has ever come to God has had to make a choice, and the consequence is great. People will not understand; they will be offended. We will be accused of betraying our nationality and our culture. But God so loves the world, because the world is His, and He deserves our first loyalty. Because we will be loyal to Him, we will bless the nations. He will bless the world, but it begins with us.

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