

Russ-04

by Art Katz

Art Katz emphasizes the need for the church to adopt an apostolic perspective that recognizes the significance of eternity in the present world.

Duration: 54:19

Scripture: Matthew 24:36, Acts 17:23, Acts 17:30, Romans 2:5, 2 Corinthians 5:10, 2 Timothy 4:2, Hebrews 9:27

Topics: "Eternity"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of freedom in relation to the world and its power. He shares a personal experience of being stopped by a policeman for no apparent reason, highlighting the arbitrary exercise of power. The preacher criticizes the world for removing God from its creation and reducing Christianity to a mere preference. He emphasizes the emptiness and deception of a godless existence and calls for a return to a life of significance and repentance towards the living God. The sermon challenges believers to live with an eternal perspective and resist the distractions and temptations of the world.

Transcript

In my sessions with the class outside, I've been trying to hold up one word for their consideration, apostolic. This is the word that summed up the character of the early church, the word with distinctive meaning, that has been lost to us in modern times, and needs at the end to be restored. For example, do you believe that we are at the end? Yeah? Oh, okay.

The end of what? And what follows that end? What are they asking? Oh, good. You have little need for me. You're already well instructed.

Do you know the time or the encounter of Paul at Mars Hill in Athens? It takes place in Acts chapter 17. Paul was brought there by others and escaped from persecution. He himself had no intention of being there.

But while he was there, he observed that the whole city was given over to idolatry. And the next verse begins with a therefore. And already we are introduced into an apostolic pattern.

A man who is stirred by the spirit. And then there is a therefore. A consequence, something that follows.

Something that he did not himself anticipate. But unfolded from the fact that he himself is the apostolic man. He sees apostolically.

The great city of Athens. The glory that was Greece. All that men exalted and for which they had such national pride.

The city of the philosophers. The birthplace of humanism. Into that this lowly Hebrew walked.

And of necessity there must therefore be conflict. These are totally opposite things. The apostle is the man of heaven.

He has a heavenly perspective. He sees as God sees. He is not impressed with human accomplishment.

He sees through it. He sees the lies and the evasions of that system. A system that purports to love truth.

The great prophets, Plato and Socrates. The great philosophers, Plato and Socrates. Know thyself, Socrates said.

Out of it came the philosophy of the enlightenment. Of which we ourselves are the product today. Man is the measure of all things.

Everything is man exalting. His architecture and his monuments. And this is what confronted Paul.

And this is what will confront us. For we are moving toward that same conflict. Of an ultimate and a final kind.

That which celebrates man and that which celebrates God. And the issue is eternal. The philosophers with whom Paul spoke that day.

Most of them disregarded what he said. They called him a babbler. Because he spoke of the resurrection.

And is there anything more offensive to man than that view? It is ultimate offense. That God should raise the dead. And that he should one day judge all men by that man whom he raised from the dead.

Even Jesus Christ. Paul was not ashamed to proclaim this. Though his hearers had no previous exposure.

They were hearing the message for the first time. And it may well be an only time. Everything rested upon the word.

For they would stand accountable before God having heard it. The issue of their eternity was being determined that day. By men who had not so much an idea that there is such a thing as eternity.

This is our task also. The whole world is living in the lie. It is the denial of eternity.

That this is the significant life. And who is to say what lies beyond? Men have no fear of death. Hell is a Christian myth.

Heaven is an abstraction and a vagary. Everything contends against the apostolic view. For the things that are eternal are invisible, Paul says.

And the things that are visible are impressive. Have you ever been to Athens? Even today? Its ruins are impressive. What was it at the time of Paul? When it stood in all of its glory.

It could have been intimidated by all of the visible expressions of the grandeur of that great civilization. But against that Paul spoke another view. This is the apostolic task.

To present another perspective. The perspective of God. For which men will be held accountable on that day.

Paul said to them that God has winked in times past with your nonsense. God has winked. He was patient and forbearing.

But now commands all men everywhere to repent. For he has appointed a day in which he will judge all men by that man whom he has raised from the dead. I don't know how mature you are in the faith but at your leisure examine Paul's statement in Acts 17.

It is a spontaneous and unrehearsed statement. And yet it remarkably sums up the great elements of the faith. It ends with an apocalyptic conclusion that God will judge all men.

It contains an appeal for repentance. God commands all men everywhere to repent. Most of them disregarded what was said.

Paul was only a novelty for them. A passing curiosity. Others said, we'll hear it again another time.

But they never did. But a few cleaved to Paul and believed. The man was his message.

How could he speak to Greeks about resurrection that had no Hebrew foundation? Because he was himself the evidence of that resurrection. And so also must we be. The apostolic man is his message.

The gospel is not a formula for conversion. It's a holy proclamation contrary to all of the logic of this world. It contains its own power and requires a man to proclaim it.

So I want to pray because I feel a little bit like Paul myself today coming into the midst of this Athens. I'm sure there must be some scoffers in their seats. You know what a scoffer is? Some doubters.

Some who doubt. Some who think that my appearance is only a curiosity. Who think that the subject of eternity is an idle matter.

So much rests upon what I am in God. So much rests upon what I myself am in God. And your ability to discern it.

Young though you are in the faith we have responsibility for me to speak and you to discern. That's what eternity means. Eternity is right now.

Is this moment going to come again? A message just like this that touches these categories What is at stake? The ministries of some people in this room. The way in which they will perceive the faith itself and the way in which they will express it. Life and death may be affected by this speaking.

Even the issue of heaven or hell this is an eternal now. Brother, don't you have an exaggerated view? This is after all only a class. Don't get carried away.

As your faith is, so be it unto you. How do you see it? Do you see the issue of eternity and what we are about? Not only in this hour but in all of our hours. The church that sees the issue of eternity continually that is an apostolic church.

That is the church that will be used for His glory. That is the church that God will bring up to Mars Hill. It sees apostolically and there is a therefore that follows.

The most important thing for it is the therefore. So let's pray.

Precious Holy God we ask your mercy in Jesus' name take from us all bodily fatigue mental exhaustion renew our hearts and minds and spirits open our ears to hear deeply and fully what you are saying if this is a word that will affect our future will affect our ministry will affect our nation will affect the world grant us the grace to hear it and to be changed by it and to take it to heart and to see the things that are invisible and eternal by turning away from the things that are seen help us, change us redeem this time as if it was once and for all as if it would never be given again help us to seize this moment and to receive the full value of it for time and for eternity in Jesus' name we ask it Amen there are those who will recognize eternity there is no controversy they think that

it begins after death they do not see its implication for now and therefore they have missed the question eternity is not something that is merely future but present the church already lives in anticipation of the eternal future and that very seeing affects the character of the church it saves it from being locked into time into the present culture it already looks forward to the thing that is future there is an expectation and an eagerness that affects its present walk that directly affects today's work of the church no one has suffered more for the faith than Paul how many times was he beaten with rods and with whips stoned and left for dead in shipwreck and at sea in hungers and in fastings the weight of all the churches the responsibility and yet though he was such a sufferer and bore

the marks of Christ in his body he said, my afflictions are momentary and light because he saw the invisible weight of glory he saw the eternal weight of glory that made his present afflictions both momentary and light his view of the things that were unseen affected his present will there be a suffering for a church in the future will there be a violent collision in the last days between darkness and light will there be martyrs again at the end as there were in the beginning how shall we bear it by seeing the things that are invisible and eternal that make our present sufferings momentary and light that's a very real seeing it's an apostolic view and why don't we share it we agree that there's an eternity but it has no practical consequence for us now because we're seeing the things that

are seen the Mercedes Benzes that are in our streets the new merchandise and attractive things that are now available there is so much that demands our seeing that it takes a certain determination to resist it an apostolic determination for we shall see the things that are invisible in exact proportion that we refuse to see the things that are seen you say, brother, if I carry on like that I will be strange it will make me uncomfortable with my friends even Christians will not know how to understand me that's true are you willing to be such pilgrims and strangers and sojourners in the earth looking for a city whose builder and maker is God that sounds like a formula for insanity or ultimate sanity one or the other or would you like a Christianity that is not so extreme that does not

require as much where you can still be reasonable and find acceptance in society and in the world that's available but it will not bring you up to Mars Hill I wish I could just be speaking to the few here who are responsive to a word like this this is not for everyone this is not methods and techniques of how to succeed in ministry it's a peculiar view it will make you strange it will make you uncomfortable but it will open the heavens to you and you'll see things that are closed to others that will make you capable of sacrifice and bring you to a special use one that confronts the spirit of the world there's a suffering from

which one is kept it's not that you are saved from the suffering because to hold such a view invites suffering it will bring upon your head a reality of retaliation

and an oppression that others are not required to experience the powers of the air said Jesus we know and Paul we know the powers of the air said Jesus we know and Paul we know but who are you? and that's what they say today they know whom to fear and whom to respect and there's something about having the eternal perspective that terrifies them because it's in that realm that the great issues of the faith are to see the things that are invisible and eternal is not only the things that pertain to God's glory but to the things that oppose God also are you aware of such invisible spirit presences over the city of Kiev?

Paul said we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against the principalities and powers the rulers of this world's darkness do they exist still? or have they disappeared since Paul's time? if they have not a communist regime to employ can they find another? are they not the gods of this world? and provide the world with its ideologies and the things that distract it from God they exist still and there's only one agency in the earth that can both recognize and defeat them it's the church that sees the things that are invisible it's not an easy seeing it's a painful seeing to obtain and it will mock you before these powers as one to be opposed and bring trials for your life that others would not be required to experience are you willing?

Paul was able to bring eternity into time the sacred into the secular was there anything more secular than Mars Hill in Athens? and Paul brought an entirely total view totally different view he challenged the premises by which men live and he would not let them get away with it I see the inscription on the monuments before me to the unknown God but he was not impressed with them he saw the deceit of that it sounds so impressive to the unknown God it sounds so spiritual but Paul saw that these men did not desire that God be known they would prefer that he remain unknown for an unknown God cannot make any requirement of men what did Paul say about that? he whom you worship ignorantly I declare unto you and I will declare him unto you in such a way as will make you responsible until this time God has winked he has looked aside God has winked he has indulged you he has been patient with you he has allowed this little deception but now with my word he commands your repentance I wish there were Pauls in the world today I wish there were Pauls who were confronting my Jewish people for I know my people well they have no notion of eternity everything is this life and that is why they are given to such accomplishments to leave behind something for the other generations the coming generation no notion that they would ever stand before God that there is a day in which God will judge all men a fearful day the day of the Lord what an absurd thought is there any message more foolish to preach than that? that the world is moving toward an end and that all men will stand before God as judge and that a decision will be made for eternity where the good deeds that they did will not impress God that it is too late to repent and now they suffer the result of their ignorance who will preach that? and preach it convincingly in such a way as to require men to choose for or against God that takes apostolic authority that takes apostolic power in exact proportion as we believe those things and live as if we believe them what is apostolic is a lifestyle of a people who think that this life and this world is transient and passing who share the blessed hope of the early church of the coming of the Lord and of His eternal kingdom for which every present sacrifice and suffering now is worthwhile to them God gives an authority and a power to communicate such a view so contrary to the whole spirit of the age can you imagine an entire church like this?

God is waiting for such even in Kiev a church built on the foundations of the apostles and the prophets so my question is are we living as if we believe these things? for our responsibility is to bring eternity into time because it is our responsibility to bring eternity into our time we refuse to buy the lies of the world that would separate the sacred and the secular God calls us to bring the holy into the profane and you have to

see Russia through my eyes all of these blocks of flats utilitarian provides housing a little space for the kids to play take the dog out to do his business everything is functional and godless there is no hint of anything that is beyond time it is the great now and it lacks that redeeming sense of God it is man stripped of God and building and making in his

own light it is the greatest statement of atheism I have ever seen in the world I have seen more of God in African mud huts and simple villages in lower Egypt than I see in the great cities of Russia and Ukraine godless eating and having and going and doing as if this life is the whole purpose for our being and there is nothing beyond it but a better flat or a better car it is a deception and it is a lie and you are allowing your people to languish in that lie who is challenging the lie who is showing the emptiness of this existence where in the same land there is drunkenness as I have never seen it how many drunks have already been laying on my neck falling on my neck man is made for eternity man is made for significance for significant living and this world, this godless world cannot

provide it where is the church of Paul that can show to men another way and show them the way to find it by repenting of this world of its mindset and of its lousy values to turn to the living God who is coming soon as judge this is the apostolic message it requires apostolic power apostolic authority to those who are living an apostolic lifestyle even though other alternatives are open to them it is a choice are you promoting the subject of eternity as an opinion or a conviction spoken in the scriptures and the things that are eternal they will abide forever and the things that seem now so impressive will have utterly passed away are you living in anticipation of that it is another kind of living it is another kind of freedom by which you are not intimidated by the world its visible

power does not impress you we were stopped this morning by a policeman on our way to the meeting he waved us down with his wand there was not a thing that was visible about our vehicle that required that it was simply the arbitrary exercise of power it was a joke it was pitiful that this man should enjoy his sense of authority and seek to impede us from coming to our place in God oh the pathetic emptiness of it the hollowness of it it brings you to tears for the condition of men in the world but certainly not to be impressed by them I'll make a few statements about what the world has succeeded in doing it has removed God from his own creation it thinks that God is a matter of opinion it thinks that Christianity is a kind of religious or cultural preference God is not required to live in

this life and one can still be moral and purport to appreciate truth and omit the question of God entirely as if it's not a matter of ultimate concern it dismisses the ultimate questions entirely and makes the things that are temporary and immediate to be ultimate it's a false inversion of all values and who's going to blow the whistle on that who's going to expose the lie who's going to show men their error to allow men to think that God is unknowable as if God prefers that he would remain unknowable and that somehow a significant life can be lived by God but he's the issue of all truth it's a lie from the father of lies and to continue in that is to suffer death it leaves men in a vacuum that they fill with alcohol with noise with stupidity with violence because God has been taken from

their consideration you know what the millennium is? the thousand year rule and reign of Christ is God restored to his own creation the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof and the fullness of it and the nations and them that dwell in them this is God's earth God's creation God's nations and he needs to be restored to his own creation that's our task to announce and to call men to it now while they can yet decide for God for later is too late and they are eternally shut out of it Paul said to these philosophers who every day seek some new thing God has made of one blood all manner of men and established the bounds of

their habitation their nations that they might seek after him if happily they might find him that is the purpose of life that's the purpose of history that's the

purpose of nations to give us a certain security that we might seek God in this life we decide for eternity that sounds like a view that comes out of the middle ages it is contrary to modern thinking it is too absolute too narrow too dogmatic too embarrassing who would dare proclaim it only those who believe it and live as if they believe it I want to pray for such a presence in Kiev for my Jewish people's sake in this city and those who will otherwise perish with them except the light of eternity shine upon them now except the word of eternity come to them now not a word about eternity the word of eternity the word from eternity by those who dwell in the eternal place now while they are yet in the earth this is apostolic and nothing else is let's pray for this while there's time so Lord,

we're speaking by faith and as we look out visibly at what we can see we are not encouraged but we trust your word that it has its origin from heaven that it will bring eternity into time that it will awaken those who sleep even in the church let it have its work its true work its full work in Jesus' name we ask it Amen I have a little book it's my journal as a Jewish atheist ex-Marxist and how God got hold of me 30 years ago and it's still relevant for today because my Jewish people are struggling with the same issues now more and more that I struggle with them and those who have a Jewish mentality though they are not born Jews modern men in the world will be challenged by this book it's not written by a believer by an atheist being apprehended by God it's a remarkable document which we

published at our expense that you might put it into the hands of Jewish people and others who share their mentality so it will be available here at the front take one at the break time pray over it read it give it to those to whom the Lord will direct you and require something from them did you read the book? what did you think of it? do you think it was true? do you think this man actually heard the voice of God? can you believe there is such a God? for you can you call upon Him? use this book as a tool to save men out of eternal death lay hands upon it and pray anointing we bless it in Jesus' name Amen

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