

The Apocalyptic End

by Art Katz

The sermon emphasizes the importance of apocalyptic in understanding the Bible's teaching on the end times, judgment, and the role of Israel, and encourages listeners to revive this expectancy in their view of the Lord.

Duration: 30:23

Topics: "End Times"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being prepared for the future judgments of God. He urges the listeners to have a strong faith and not be bewildered or panic-stricken when these judgments come. The speaker highlights the need for the earth to be purged of its sins through God's judgments, and how this is a reflection of God's character. He also emphasizes the significance of understanding and believing in the day of the Lord's appearing and the final judgments.

Transcript

So we've never been this way heretofore. We've never before pondered or expressed anything upon apocalyptic. But I'm coming to the impression that it's a critical key.

So we need to understand what it represents, why there has been a historic repudiation of it in the Church through the ages, trying to dismiss it as some hangover from Paul, from his Jewish roots, as if it's some kind of a myth. And the rabbis do not emphasize apocalyptic, because whenever Israel has believed for it, it has opened the door to disaster. As for example, in the Roman conquest of Jerusalem in 70 AD, Jews actually thought that they would triumph, that God would vindicate them according to the apocalyptic expectation that the righteous would be exalted and the wicked and the evil would be judged.

And so they even defended themselves by standing on the roof of the temple, only to go up in flames, because the temple was not spared. So that's why the book of Daniel is in Aramaic, and why Daniel is not even listed among the prophets in Jewish terminology. And so I'm suggesting that this is the key in discerning the true and false prophets of the last days, and how they treat the subject of Israel.

Whether you see it as a climax of the age that requires the divine intervention, the Lord's own coming and kingdom, his judgment upon the nations and upon Israel in that coming, or you see a gradual fulfillment and improvement for the state of Israel that it need not pass through horrendous scenes of judgment, but will be progressively improved over a course of time. You understand what I'm saying? What that amounts to in the last analysis is the issue of the cross. So there's a shrinking from hard scenarios.

So I have a classic book here, by a Dutch theologian, who teaches at Princeton, who has majored on Paul's apocalyptic view. If you don't anticipate a kingdom, and the Lord's coming, that issues out of a final judgment upon the nations and upon Israel, the whole view of the faith is affected, and has been, so that forfeiting that expectation, people have believed for a heaven, a personal salvation with a go to heaven, but there's no view of Israel at the conclusion of the age. So you either move from that to a consideration of that which is personal and subjective, and that has prevailed till now in most of our contemporary Christianity, going to heaven, personal salvation, but no larger view of what the cosmic purposes of God are, that are fulfilled in the last days in his coming.

There's even an embarrassment in the church about the divine intervention of God, that the Lord himself will actually come, his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives. I don't know why it is, but, we would much prefer a natural explanation, than a supernatural one. But according to Paul's apocalyptic, it's totally supernatural.

The Lord comes to judge, to establish his kingdom, to raise those that are asleep in Christ, and to take his place in the sanctuary, and on the holy hill of Zion, where the root of his government is to be expressed. So this author writes, individualism and spiritualization, if not church self-aggrandizement, are the inevitable results of avoiding Paul's apocalyptic view. If you avoid Paul's view, then the faith reduces itself to a subjective, personal kind of thing, of going to heaven.

There's no expectation of climactic events, which maybe we don't want to face. There are also ethical implications, because Paul speaks in Thessalonians, that the believers would walk worthy of the kingdom and the glory to which they are called. And in walking worthy, it will actually establish their place in the kingdom.

But if you lose the incentive of a kingdom, and your place in the kingdom, it's just a matter of going to heaven, sitting on a cloud, you lose the incentive of a moral and ethical kind, for overcoming in the last days. So there are all kinds of implications, about this apocalyptic view, because Paul, with the prophets, expected the day of the Lord. Where do you hear that expectation today in the church? That the day of the Lord is an ominous, final event, toward which everything is tending.

It's not a popular view, that the day of the Lord, is not a day to be enjoyed or sought, it's a day of darkness and peril. That's why Peter says, seeing these things, what manner of men ought we to be? Because he subscribed with Paul, and the prophets, to the day of the Lord, the Lord's day. A final day of reckoning, in which all of the injustice, the unrighteousness, blasphemy against the Lord, would have its comeuppance.

The Lord would judge those who have, treated him shabbily. A day of last judgment. But already, Peter speaks about, scoffers, who say, where is the day of his appearing? Because since the fathers fell asleep, nothing has been changed.

Those who pursue earthly lusts, lose the apocalyptic expectation, and dismiss it. That somehow, the condition of your lust, affects your theology. You'll not believe for a day of the Lord.

You'll not live in anticipation or fear of it. You'll not see to it that your act is cleaned up. That when the Lord comes, he judges, brings his rewards, to those who deserve them.

That we will all stand before, the judge and give account, for what we have done in our bodies, both good and bad. This is a whole, remarkable view, that has the most profound, and radical, practical implications,

if you believe this. But already men were scoffing, where is the, the thought of his return? But since the fathers fell asleep, nothing has changed.

Where is the promise of his coming? Everything is predicated on Paul's, principle of the resurrection. Inaugurated by Jesus, but consummated in his coming. That those that are asleep in Christ, shall rise first.

And that even Israel, what shall the return be, but life from the dead. So there's a whole resurrection motif, at the end of the age, in the apocalyptic view, predicated, on the resurrection of the Lord, and will be spelled out, and be finalized, in implications, that touch both Israel, the church, the kingdom. That those who take a, positive view of present Israel, and seek the success of the state, through a gradual means of improvement, are off this ground.

And, it disarms the church, and removes the expectation, of a last days apocalyptic, conclusion to the age, for which we need now to be in anticipation, and preparation. So, that's how this whole subject came up. What will distinguish, true and false prophets? And I believe it will be the issue of Israel, and how men will treat that subject.

If they fail to see Israel, in terms of coming judgment, time of Jacob's trouble, passing through the ordeals of the last days, being sifted, and the role of the church in that sifting, is a, very important ground. In Thessalonians, Paul is full of reference to apocalyptic things, where he speaks in the first chapter of that book, to those who turn from their idols, to serve the living God, and to wait for his son from heaven, in verse 10, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. So there's a wrath to come, and part of the greatness of salvation, is not just a place in heaven, but to be saved from the judgment that falls upon sinful mankind.

You get that note in the very first preaching at Pentecost. Come out from this untoward generation. This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, that of the last days.

So that, these signs of the Holy Spirit, will be followed by judgment, and your salvation, is to be saved out from that generation, and we don't hear that note, in today's preaching, that salvation, is to be saved from the judgments of God, in the last days. When Paul speaks of bringing the whole counsel of God, this is what is included. The issue of the last days, the issue of judgment, the issue of the climax of the age, the day of the Lord's appearing, the final judgments, that was part and parcel of his entire message to the church, and because it was, they grew up with a certain reality and expectancy that affected their constitution.

We lack that, that emphasis, and it's reflected in the low quality of the church. So we need again the full, and the whole counsel of God, particularly the aspects of that counsel that are difficult to consider. Judgment.

Judgment on the nations, judgment on Israel, judgment on how this is not in keeping with God's character, and that we are embarrassed that he will condescend to judge. But if we omit God's judgment, we omit God, as I've said so many times, that his judgment is intrinsic to what he is in himself, and it's not a bitter pill to swallow, it's out from his righteousness. His righteousness requires judgment.

So the scripture says that when his judgments are in the earth, the world will learn righteousness. So we need to be enlarged in our view of the Lord as it comes to bear on the things of the last days, to revive this apocalyptic expectancy, which will not embarrass us, but I think bring a quality of maturity and seriousness

to the church that it now presently lacks. So you can pick up in Paul these references to save us from the wrath to come, and then at the end of chapter 2, for what is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing are not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? There's a delayed parousia, there's a delayed fulfillment that Paul had to work his way about because his expectation was that this was almost immediately to be expected.

And when it did not come, it required another way of viewing it so that the issue is not chronology, the issue is expectation, that these things shall come to pass, shortly come to pass in the Lord's time, and though it be delayed, it will not be withheld. I think that because the climax of the age has not come, that it will not come. We have every reason to expect it, and Paul communicated that to the church and sank that deep into their hearing that they would have this kind of expectation and live as if the end of the age were at hand.

This is not psyching out the church, this is doing the church service. So we have to rid ourselves of chronology, and when shall this happen? Since the fathers fell asleep, nothing has changed, and expect what Paul anticipates on the basis of his remarkable insight and revelation given him as the chief apostle, and that he commends to all the church and to our own generation. Are you expecting the coming of the Lord? And will it be a joyous occasion or a grim one? What will our condition be in his appearing? We need to anticipate that and walk worthy of the kingdom and the glory to which we are called, that when he comes, we shall be found blameless in his sight.

There are so many other references here in Thessalonians chapter 3, in the last verse of that chapter, To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints. This is so fixed an aspect of Paul's understanding of expectation that he can speak it boldly, but we're not hearing that now, but we need to. Again in chapter 4, For this we say unto you, that by the word of the Lord, we which are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord shall not prevent the coming of the Lord.

So, reference after reference to the coming of the Lord, the end of the age, judgment, and the Lord's own person, so maybe we need to explore a bit, why is it that the church shrinks from considerations of this kind? Because we have lost something essential to our whole comprehension of the faith, if we miss this apocalyptic moment, we become a soft, sappy church. One day is like the next, our programs, that's what he said before, the self-aggrandizement of the church, its own programs, is couched in a faith that is personal and subjective and omits the larger cosmic purposes of God by which the age is concluded. About imminent judgment, so there's a shallow atmosphere that prevails and the moral condition of the church betrays that.

Something was established with the death and resurrection of Jesus at the outset of the faith that has implications and consequences right through to the end of the age in these final judgments as the outworking of that cross and of that resurrection. A new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. So, I have to brace myself, how will I hold up if I'm living in that generation which gives that grace to see these things coming to pass? How will I bear it? How will I bear the two-thirds of Israel that will suffer annihilation by every biblical reckoning and the proliferation and the flight of Jews that somehow this is needful to conclude the age? I use the word cosmic, the cosmic purposes of God that are being affected but we have little comprehension of those things but we can see them in judgment.

We need to shift gears and come into Paul's apocalyptic view simply because it's Paul's. If he sees it and says it that's definitive for the church whether we agree, whether we are disposed to scenarios of that kind. If he sees it and says it it's incumbent upon us to believe it and to accept it.

There may be the whole issue of Paul in the last days whether he'll suffer a rejection by aspects of the church and maybe the issue of two false prophets is what is their identification with Paul? How much are they in agreement? How much do they see eye to eye? How much do they share his view and expectation? The most prominent messianic ministries in Israel today believe that Israel will be saved by their ministries. It doesn't require apocalyptic dealings or judgments but by their witness and sharing Israel will be saved. Put the premium on them and their ministry rather than the dealings of God which are contrary.

So are you looking forward to a glorified body? Not just to be rid of our infirmities but to be fitted for our kingdom reality that we need to ascend and descend upon the son of man and be able to function in the realm of earth and the realm of the heavenlies in a body that is not fixed. These sound outlandish don't they? Off the wall seeing that all these things shall be burned up and the elements melt with a fervent heat what manner of man ought we to be? Peter asks. We need to be a certain kind of man that can stand in the face of such devastating judgments and lead others maybe to a place of safety and faith because we ourselves do not panic.

We expect these severities and that somehow the new heavens and the new earth needs to be preceded by those things that are in the earth that need now to be burned up. Nothing less will purge the earth of blood violence, iniquity and the judgments of God. Interesting.

Verse 5 For this they willingly are ignorant of that by the word of God the heavens were of old and the earth standing out of the water and in the water whereby the world that then was being overflowed with water perished. Willingly ignorant describes that generation and will probably describe our own doesn't want to see doesn't want to consider these things but the heavens in verse 7 and the earth which are now by the same word are kept in store reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But beloved be not ignorant of this one thing that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.

So he's making explanation why this has not yet taken place it's a delayed parousia but the Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness but as long suffering to usward not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance but the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat nevertheless we

according to his promise look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness wherefore beloved seeing that you look for such things be diligent that you may be found with him in peace without spot and blameless remarkable statement coming from a fisherman almost eclipses Paul but he shows the moral implication of the expectation of the day of the Lord in which you should be found blameless and holy and have every incentive when the Lord comes as judge but there's also a promise a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness and that has got to be sustaining in the face of the

terrible devastations that will come that all of that is to clear away the debris and the clutter and the moral collapse of the world that for which there's no answer but a judgment by

burning and devastation but once it takes place there'll be a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness so we need to look for that which is beyond judgment the promise of God new heaven and a new earth praise God I'm sick to the teeth of unrighteousness I'm sick of vile things I'm sick of the low moral estate of the church and of the world so I can't wait when the Lord will himself have established righteousness in the earth but before it comes something must be purged out and it will require this judgment but seeing that you look for such things be diligent that you may be found of him in peace without spot and blameless then he speaks about Paul's remarkable grasp of these things in his epistles which in which are some things hard to be understood which they that are

unlearned and unstable rest as they do all the other scriptures to their own destruction you therefore beloved seeing you know these things before beware lest you also be led away with the error of the wicked fall from your own steadfastness because we know that falling away a great apostasy is one of the chief marks of the end of the age but grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to him be glory both now and forever Amen we need to imbibe these verses take them in we need to be part and parcel of the reality that we inhabit and that we expect because as I've said it will make all the difference we're faced with the option of speaking ourselves in scripture however contrary it is to receiving reality we opt for the word of God as being definitive and we

live in what it says so the last days will more and more challenge us in this way shall we turn to prayer thank you precious God on high for sounding what you have a neglected note in the church's consideration we shrink from this Lord we want happier scenarios to contemplate we want to see Israel progressively improved not realizing how much that is a humanistic presumption in itself and nothing short of the devastation of your judgments will bring Israel to the place of your desire so Lord we want to be the students of Paul and of all the scriptures Lord and we're faced with a challenge that what is expressed there is contrary to what we presently see and don't want to see and yet you speak of these dire things to come when the elements themselves will melt with fervent heat and the

whole of the world as we know it will be dissolved so Lord we put iron in our souls to brace ourselves for the realities that are sure to come to pass and in that day Lord we will not be bewildered or confused or panic stricken but we will be islands of safety and guidance for those who have not our privilege in the scripture thank you my God for ending our days on this note forgive me for the failure to more adequately bring it forth but may we continue in our own perusal of this subject to lay hold of the apocalyptic of Paul and of the prophets the day of the Lord the day of his judgment the final day toward which every day now is tending so come precious God fit us that in the day of your appearing we shall not be ashamed thank you my God we shall be found blameless thank you Lord

because we have taken your exhortations to your heart bless the church bless what is represented here in this room for the church my God and bring through them some aspect of this into the various places of their return so we thank you my God for the whole counsel of God we don't shrink from it because you are altogether just and righteous you do all things well and even your judgments my God are a testimony to your holiness so do we bless you Lord thank you for Paul thank you for the lonely battles that he faced and maintaining this faith against all opposition come and let there be a renaissance of Paul for the church in which we recognize that what you gave to him is definitive for us all so do we thank you Lord and we give you praise for this concluding time of this evening let it not

dissipate away but serve to begin considerations Lord that are on time

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