

# The Failure of the Church in Japan

by Art Katz

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*Art Katz addresses the failures of the Church in Japan, highlighting the impact of idolatry, cultural syncretism, and the need for a pure gospel amidst historical challenges.*

**Duration:** 1:05:37

**Scripture:** Psalm 149:1, Isaiah 55:6, Joel 2:32, Acts 2:37

**Topics:** "Japan"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of effectively communicating the truth of the Gospel and winning others to it. He warns that failure to do so will lead to disastrous consequences. The speaker refers to a psalm that encourages praising the Lord even in the midst of adversity, highlighting the need to worship God in all circumstances. He also discusses the concept of God's judgment, explaining that it is not meant to condemn but to bring redemption. The sermon concludes with the idea that believers are called to act as representatives of God, executing His judgments with authority.

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## Transcript

But the Protestant failure is already going to be an extension of the Catholic failure. It sounded and left such a sour note in Japan with regard to Christianity and regard to the name of Jesus Christ that the Protestants had to labor under the legacy left behind by a failed Catholicism. So we're implicated in all that is called Christian and all I can do at best is just scan this and give a little quotation here and there that might be insightful for us.

I think one of the significant failures of the Jesuits was to use the already existing altars and other kinds of religious nomenclature and just give them a kind of a Christian reading, particularly Mary, because there was already a idol, a goddess of Japan, and so it did not take much to transfer that historic reverence for a female goddess and to transfer it to Mary. In fact, a woman and child is a recurrent theme in virtually all pagan religions and for the life of me, I'm so devoid of any response to that. I can't understand what the attraction is any more than I can understand the attraction of the goddess Diana, and yet evidently it's powerful.

Something about a mother and child, particularly a miracle child born out of something virginal, has even in pagan religions powerful resonance, and it already existed in Japan and the Catholics played upon it, and I'm sure that it's related to things pertaining to fertility. The religions of man that are idolatrous have to do with their self-interest, namely gods that can be placated to bring harvest, and that your fields will be

abundant, that your cows and your livestock will reproduce, and so on. And so even the temple prostitute worship in the Baal worship has to do with fertility.

Many of the objects of worship are like icons. What do you call this thing that's even in the courtyard of the St. Peter's in Rome? It's a obelisk. What is an obelisk? It's a phallic symbol.

It's a picture of the penis and having to do with fertility and all of that. So all of that is a mixture. Instead of cutting through that and exposing it for what it is, which is a self-serving thing where you placate false gods in order to be assured of rain or harvest, to show the root of idolatry as being self-serving rather than God-honoring, and therefore will keep you from the knowledge of the true God.

Doesn't Paul... Jesus, in the Gospel of John, how shall you understand or believe in me if you have sought the glory that comes from men? Anybody know that verse? How shall you believe if you have given yourself to seek the glory that comes from man? Once you have condescended to that, you're inured to and insulated from being able even to believe. So part of the prophetic function is to expose the anatomy of idolatry. Because it's not always going to be conveniently a phallic symbol or a statue of a woman and an infant, but take, as we've said earlier, subtle forms.

And because they're subtle, they are all the more deadly. And I think our own civilization has shot through with it. And it didn't take much for Hitler himself to play upon what was dormant in German paganism and bring up again the God of Thor, Thunder.

There's another God, German God, pagan God, begins with a W. Wotan, that have to do with power, with might, with military success, or harvest. All of that was under the surface of German civilization, though German civilization was itself the epitome of the finest expression of humanism and literature and arts and philosophy and ethics. But he tapped the deep substratum that was in the nation that the Christianity never revealed or devastated.

Because it was only a surface kind of Christianity, which is itself, therefore, a kind of idolatry. So the issues are remarkably deep and rich. What would it take for Israel to actually use the institutions given of God through Moses about worship and sacrifice, but employ them now with this idolatrous thought, as if to appease the God of Israel, so as to assure and to manipulate him as to bless? It only takes a small movement to take the thing that's authentic and to take and make it itself an idolatrous pursuit.

And that was the deadly thing for Israel, and we Christians are not far from it now ourselves. And placating our God and appeasing him in order to obtain or to manipulate God. And when we start talking about getting the presence of God by our worship, that's exactly what that is.

Rosaries, counting prayers, reciting certain numbers of prayers, is only another expression of Muslims with their beads. So objects, repetition, monotony, is all part of that whole kind of idolatrous worship, even over authentic God-given symbols, like Christ. Who then has the capacity to point that out and to make it clear in a people who have been seduced and have given themselves to it? Where is the voice and the man who sees through the subtlety and can identify and blow the whistle on it, so as to bring people to the repentant acknowledgment of their misuse of God? I'm defining the prophetic call.

That means that the man himself, in order both to be able to identify and to address, has himself to be free not only from that idolatry, but all idolatries. And what if in the last analysis, his own ministry is idolatrous to him? What if to be prophetic has taken on aspects that are idolatrous and self-serving? It nullifies any

ability to be an agent for the freedom of others. And that's why we're suffering these things.

We don't have the voices that, or the integrity that could address those things. And the willingness to do it, at risk. Men are not going to easily be relinquished their idols, or their beads, or whatever it is that they have fastened upon.

And they look upon that prophetic voice as being a threat to their established traditions that have been sanctified by much usage over the ages. I mean, you're just a Johnny-come-lately. And who do you represent? The God of Israel? Where's that? Who's that? Remember what Pharaoh said? Who is your God that I should obey him? It's just another, hey, there are deities all over the place.

What makes your God of such a kind that I'm required to oblige you? So it's like an act of ultimate effrontery to have the chutzpah to say that I represent the God who is God, and he looks upon your practices as abomination, and calls you to repent of him that you might know him. That has got to be spoken not only with conviction, but with power. And we have been a generation that has made an idolatry of power itself, and the exhibitions of power without being careful as to their source.

And we have separated charismatic power from character. The genius of Paul and the prophets of Israel have been that their character is consonant with their message, and their authority is the authority of God that is given to those who will not betray him and take his glory to themselves. Where is there an environment in which men like that who have such calling can be brought and nurtured in it, and sent forth in it, and to be maintained in it, that they should not themselves subsequently become false? Because they themselves then become the objects of the admiration of many, and they become little cultic groups themselves, as Paul warned about those who saw themselves as disciples, or they were baptized by this one or by that one.

So what I'm saying by all that is that it's a narrow path. And I don't think that any man, even with the valid and legitimate call of prophet, can negotiate it, obtain it, and maintain it, without being authentically related with a body of like-minded saints who know what is at stake in this prophetic call, and are jealously guarding it for him and with him, keeping him in prayer and in counsel. But if he becomes an entity where he has a paid staff, who necessarily applaud him and affirm his every decision, he's a candidate for himself for becoming false.

So in the context of history, and in the light of this age, the issue of true prophet is of an ultimate kind, that needs our deepest respect and attention. So the Jesuits seized upon and employed the goddess of mercy, which was the Japanese equivalent and rededicated to Mary. Temples, altars, bells, holy water vessels, censers, rosaries, all were ready and could be easily adapted to the need of the new religion.

All of this made it very easy for a Japanese to switch to the type of Christianity presented by the Jesuits, without giving up much of his Buddhist thought processes. He became externally and overtly a convert to Christianity, but in fact his thought or his mindset had never been altered. Still Buddhist and still idolatrous and idol-worshipping, even though now he would employ even the name Mary, what he really means in his heart is the goddess.

So there was a harvest, but it was kind of a false harvest of artificial growth, forced by the despotic insistence of feudal chiefs who possessed the power of life and death over their vassals, and were influenced by a desire to attract foreign trade. So here there's a little secular note, that who are these missionaries, but from Spain? And what was Spain? The great imperial power of its generation and a

commercial power. So in order to have the advantage of this new Western influence in trade and power, that the political aristocracy of Japan was disposed toward it and therefore would accept the religion that goes with it.

It was not a clean faith, it was not a real priestly rendering of the faith, but had commercial overtones, and in fact what finally brings about the undoing of Catholicism in Japan, was the plot to actually take Japan by the use of Portuguese and Spanish forces as an outpost of Catholicism by arms. Whether that was fully concocted or not, it had sufficient cogency that the Japanese now saw Christianity as being the equivalent of imperialist takeover by the Western nations from which their faith had come, namely Portugal and Spain, and therefore cast all of these missionaries out, and for 250 years no Western missionary was allowed into Japan. Because the Catholics themselves played with these commercial and national interests, and even began to hatch a conspiracy of military takeover, they ruined it for two and a half centuries about any further message of the faith in that nation.

So they were soon to learn that the militarism of the church was no match for the militarism of the paganism they faced. The period of their success in spreading the religion by the sword was short-lived, where soon the sword was taken up against them to their destruction. For those who lived by the sword will perish by the sword, or even those who threaten the use of the sword will become victims of it, and that's what happened to these Catholic missionaries who were either expelled or crucified.

And of course the message of the Lord is still under the shadow today of being from the West, and so other cultures don't want to become Westernized. Or with black people, it's the white man's gospel. How is it that these Jesuit missionaries had such an identification with their nation, Spain and Portugal, that they had to necessarily bring this corruption into the promulgation of the faith? Why didn't, if they had to make mention of any nation, why didn't they make mention of Israel, Jerusalem and Zion? For the absence of that kind of consciousness themselves, and to the degree that Rome had superseded Zion, they could not bring that note, because that note is a clear note.

To bring the reference to Jerusalem and Zion is not to introduce the threat of an imperialist nation wanting to take over for its commercial advantage, but to speak of the God of Zion, whose motives are always holy and pure, and in the interest of those he comes to serve. Why couldn't the Catholic missionaries speak of Zion and Jerusalem, and why necessarily of Spain and Portugal? Because they themselves were cut off from that identification. They themselves were supersessionists or replacement theologians who saw Rome as the Zion of Christendom, and therefore had not an authentic Zion to bring to Japan's attention, that God would have honored with his anointing, that though Zion is a hill, it's God's hill.

And I believe that there would have been a dimension of God in that message, in that proclamation, that would have had a totally different effect on the Japanese nation. In a word, the missionaries could not separate themselves from their own ethnic and national idols, and brought some measure of that, and even the fear of that to Japan, and finally brought their rejection. Why were they themselves susceptible to being nationalists of a Spanish or Portuguese kind? Because they had not subscribed to Zion.

Because they had cut off any remembrance in seeing Israel as finished, and having no ultimate future as it touched the nations. And therefore their message was a kind of truncated gospel that could be taken up with the existing idols and accommodated, and was not the pure faith that would have saved them from idols, as Paul's message did. So the issue of Zion and Jerusalem is God's antidote to Portugal and Spain.

Or any bringing in or disfiguring of the message of God by bringing in the valence of our own identifications. The thing that saves us from fleshly, national, racial or other dimensions that clouds the message is our identification with Zion. It's God's provision.

So why with such great assets did they fail? Their Christianity was an idolatrous, superstitious, ceremonial one which a pagan Buddhist could accept without much change of form and little of heart. If your gospel does not require a radical conversion, is it really the gospel of God? If it just requires a religious accommodation or a new vocabulary or a title, people still remain in their essential, idolatrous condition. These Catholic missionaries brought Inquisition-type persecution upon those who refused baptism, and so there was overt force and threat implied in their evangelizing, and that, of course, corrupts the message.

This evil record with Japan, coupled with the history of their countrymen's conquest in the Philippines, Mexico, South America and elsewhere, was their undoing, and bore ample testimony to the extent of their ignoring the command of Christ to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. The result was a proscription of all foreign missionaries from Japan for the next 250 years. So we have to remember the historical context in which this is taking place.

The Catholic Church is already in Mexico, South America, the Philippines. These are places of Spanish conquest. So why should not Japan fear that what these missionaries represented was a first foot in the door by nations that want to take them over, and therefore they have to throw out the baby with the bathwater and reject the entire faith that has been presented to them as a threat to their own nationhood? So the true ministries of God have really got to be priestly, and not reflect and bring in with them any elements that would engender this kind of fear and response.

So, in their preaching and life, the two empires of Christ and the world were not clearly distinguished in either the spheres of worship or government. An interesting observation. Someone asked, well, where were the Protestant missionaries then at that very same time? And the unhappy answer is that there was no undertaking of the Protestant church's responsibility to send the knowledge of Christ and his saving gospel into every land.

Had the Protestant churches sent out missionaries, then it is likely that the Japanese government would have permitted them, for it was only the political aggrandizing religion of Spain and Portugal that they dreaded. So here the writer is saying that the Protestant missionaries might have been received because they don't come with this affiliation, that Japan need fear, it would have been the pure message, but they didn't come. So one fails by caricaturing the faith and making it a convenient adjunct to existing idolatries, and the other fails for the want of any effort at all.

They yearn for trade with Western powers in order to grant freedom of religion to non-political religions. If such missionaries, with the same sense of evangelizing strategy that the Jesuits possess had been sent, Japan today might have been a great Christian influence in the Far East How different then would have been the ensuing history? It's remarkable what was suffered in Asia by the fact that Japan never became converted, and to this day less than 1% of its population is Christian, and even that fragment is very weak in its constituency. And so the nation therefore continued into imperialism, militarism, and became a bane to all of the nations of Asia in the 1930s and 40s.

And finally itself had to suffer the atom bombs of God, suffer the judgment of the rejection of God. In the very city where the missionaries were crucified is the very city where the bomb fell in Nagasaki. And the casualties of Hiroshima 300,000 were exactly the same total number of those that died in the Rape of

Nanking, of Chinese who were the victims of Japanese brutality.

And here's the point folks. If you not have God as God, and you have a false God as an idol, you will reflect that idol. You will yourself become false.

You have lost the tempering value of God to have sanctified us in our humanity and become brutal and less human and capable of atrocity and brutality of the kind that even animals do not exhibit. That's true both of Japan and Germany, and for the same reason. They forfeited the knowledge of God and the end thereof is the brutalizing of your own people and becoming something less than human.

It takes God to be a man. And if you have not God as God, you'll lose your humanity and descend into a less than what is human as we have seen now and are continuing to see in the world. The treatment of the Croats, the Albanians by Serbia, in this ethnic cleansing, the brutality of it, women and children, wholesale slaughter, mass burials, is the kind of brutality of which even quote, Christians are capable, whose Christianity was orthodoxy of a Serbian kind and not a genuine and apostolic faith.

The issue of the faith is paramount. And it is the issue still. Because the word Baal itself means Lord.

So you can either say Lord but mean Baal or say Baal and negate the Lord. And it's interesting that in Israel's restoration, I think in Hosea, you'll no more call me master or Lord, you'll call me husband. I'll get that word out of your mouth because it's been polluted and corrupted.

When you say Lord, you really meant Baal. And I don't want you to use that word with me. That still has this overtone.

You'll call me now what we are in our new relationship, renewed relationship as the husband and I to the spouse. You'll call me your husband and I'll call you my own. Isn't that interesting? Okay.

So the failure of Protestants to send missionaries is another sin of the Church. And had it come, there would have been likely a different history. And so with all of this, there was then the legacy of hate left to the new missionaries.

When they did come again, after two and a half centuries, they had to work against this terrible legacy left behind and the things that we have described. And today's selection in my devotional reading is a selection from Daniel where Daniel is speaking to the king of Babylon who has had a dream that he cannot interpret. And Daniel makes the interpretation known and makes it clear that the dream is about the king himself.

And that if he's going to exalt himself as being very God, God is going to humiliate him and bring him into such a judgment where this man will lose his kingship and be like an animal under the elements for seven years where his hair will become overgrown, his nails will become like fangs, and he'll be reduced to almost grazing like an animal. He'll become bestial until he will acknowledge that there's one God only and that this God sets up or disposes of kings. And here's the quotation.

Therefore, O king, may my counsel be acceptable to you. Atone for your sins with righteousness and your iniquities with mercy to the oppressed so that your prosperity may be prolonged. And that is in the interpretation.

Daniel does not hedge or mince words but clearly indicates what the word, what that dream means for this man that he might be saved from the humiliation that will follow. And this is the statement of Eugene Peterson of this verse. In Daniel's interpretation, the dream is not a prediction but a warning.

The dream does not announce what is fated. Rather, Daniel uses it to persuade the king to acknowledge that God rules. Think of this.

If there were a Daniel in Japan to confront Shintoism and temple worship, shrines and the emperor as God with the same kind of courage and directness as Daniel confronts the king of Babylon and there would have been a repentance and a forsaking of that which is false, what would have been subsequent Japanese history? So I wrote, It's not enough to critique but to offer the better alternative which the western missionaries of Japan were unable to do. It's not enough to show the king his error but to require of him a repentance. So that takes more than just discerning what the dream means but speaking in the authority of God and calling the very king himself to the place of repentance.

That requires an ultimate authority and an anointing in God and a fearlessness which Daniel expressed but which evidently the church in Japan could not perform. And if you don't perform this, what is the faith that you're commending? What is Christianity or the faith of the God of Israel if it loses this prophetic quotient? Does it not become just a form and a shambles and a kind of a collection of religious things even to put in the name of Jesus that in the last analysis that constitutes an idolatry and a substitute for true faith to God. So the retention of the prophetic kernel of the faith which is the ability to confront idolatry and even the head of an idolatrous state and interpret for him what others cannot and show the application and give warning and call to repentance is the heart of the faith.

The church in Japan, the missionary church in Japan had no visionary sense of this, no prophetic dimension to their existence and what they were concerned about was the perpetuation and the preservation of their own religious interests. So long as the Japanese state would allow the continuation of their services and their church schools they would make whatever concession needed to be made. So rather than challenging the system as Daniel did they accommodate it and in the end they lost both their schools and their church.

We'll come back to this. We're going to study Daniel and ask the questions of what makes Daniel, Daniel? Well to ask that question is to ask what makes the prophet, prophet? And to ask that question is to ask what makes the church prophetic? And to ask that question is to ask what is the gospel and what is the faith? If it lacks this. So I wrote because of that inability to be a Daniel to the emperor of Japan and to the status quo in government it made the citing of Jesus Christ prissy verbally justified, a religious rhetoric entirely without meaning to the Japanese and made it ceremonial and even defamatory or injurious to Jesus name a mere putting forth of its own idol and its own shrine.

If you lack this prophetic reality then what is even the correct language of the faith and its practices but itself another idolatry that has no demand upon those who hear it sufficient to make them forsake their idols to serve the living God. For your idolatry is only an equivalent to their idolatry and it's yours because you're western and it's part of your culture while this is ours because this is part of our culture. In other words the projection of the faith has got to be so commanding, so absolute, so true that men see by comparison their idols revealed as false.

But if your religion has degenerated itself to an idolatry, to beads or to external forms or to a rhetoric, a certain form of speech how then shall they be challenged? And the answer is they will not. It takes a

Daniel. And in this article I wrote I should really date it I don't know how old this is but it's good talking about history and the gods a kind of a book report written by a Swedish theologian who indicates that what is particularly Israelite is that God not only acts in history but reveals himself in his acts.

History is the medium of that revelation and revelation is the active intervention of God. Yahweh has made himself known he has executed judgment. And this is what Daniel is saying to this king there's a judgment coming there's a God who observed there's a God who will intervene he has given you a prominent kingdom and has allowed you to obtain a certain exaltation but now you're threatening close to seeing yourself as being God and therefore you're going to suffer a judgment.

That this is characteristic of Israelite faith and prophetic faith which is one and the same thing that God is in these events and that the function of the prophet is to express this and to interpret it for those who have not this biblical foundation. That was the function of prophets to Israel itself if they had received the prophet's word they would not themselves have suffered the judgments that they prophesied for becoming apostate and the taking of the authentic faith and making of it an idolatrous substitute. And that the God of Israel differing from the pagan deities who are jealous and in contention with one another who need to be placated this God intervenes in history and judges and sends his word to announce this coming judgment.

So that the prophet is not only the bearer of that word but the one who interprets the word for the nation that they might understand and receive it and be saved from that judgment. This is what distinguishes Israelite religion from the pagan thing that surrounded it that also had a sense of God's judgment but not the issue of propheticness and the word spoken that was also to be interpreted by the one who brings it. And more than that he is sent by the living God.

He's a sent man with a sent word that is anointed by the God who sends him. This the pagan religions did not have. But to be that for God and even to God's own nation Israel requires a remarkable identification with that God and his purposes even at the risk of his own life.

If he cannot bear the rejection of men which invariably follows he cannot be the bearer of that word. The church in Japan lacked that kind of identification with God. And so long as its first concern was the perpetuation of its own institutions and the allowance to continue and to enjoy services and school it could not be that prophetic voice because the prophetic voice can never be prophetic so long as it is compromised by other countervailing interests.

It has got to be exclusively sent of God for the jealousy of God and for the glory of God, the purpose of God. So the failure of the church in Japan is the failure to be that voice. And the questions I'm wanting to raise in the days ahead this week is that valid? Is that a valid function for the church to be a prophetic voice in its nation or to the nations? Are we sticking our nose in business that is not ours to intervene and bring a message to men in authority of rule and government and to warn them of judgments or to bring them to an awareness of moral failure in the conduct of the nation? Or to tell them that the course that they're taking in militarism and imperialism is going to eventuate into a world war that will victimize nations and in the end victimize themselves? Is that a valid role for the church? Because we talk about the separation of church and state and in fact our state would love to see us to stay within the confines of our own business.

And so long as we do, they'll allow that and even give us concessions and privileges of tax deductions and various other considerations. But the moment we go out from that and feel that we have an obligation to God to the nation, to bring to question its policies, its policies or conduct as being ungodly or immoral, then

we have exceeded what the state or the world is willing to allow us as our boundaries. And that brings the collision that will result for us and that resulted for others opposition persecution monitoring.

Even to identify homosexuality for what it is, not some generic sin or something inherent in a defaulted biology, but itself already the judgment of God forsaken us. When God abandons men to their own lusts and even to the misuse of their own bodies, it's a judgment for an earlier sin which is the rejection of God and the celebration of the creature over the creator. That's the prophetic function.

Not only to condemn the homosexual laws, but to show what is the root of homosexuality itself. Because now what we're hearing in Time and Newsweek magazine, they can't help it. It's a genetic defect and they're born that way.

That's not what Paul says. So we have to bring forward a biblical statement of God's perception of that reality which is at odds with the way society itself wants to interpret it and bring us into collision. And the whole issue of the validity of what is our source, we're quoting from the Bible.

How authoritative is that and why should they be under obligation to acknowledge it? We are in the most uncomely position against the world, having all the marvels and all the credentials of the authority of science and biology, laboratories and all those things and we're standing on the statement of God by Paul 2,000 years before the advent of either biology or science. So shall you be established, believe in the prophets, so shall you prosper. Something like that.

God makes the fundamental relationship with himself, the acceptance of the prophet and the prophetic word, where the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus. So I'm happy for all this because it's like salvaging the great word prophet and prophecy from the kind of misuse that attends it now in our generation where virtually anything goes and any man who presumes to be is being recognized as that. The Lord is giving us, though it was not the object of our intention, a clearer definition of what the prophetic function is and how central it is to the whole issue of the church and the very faith itself and for the want of which the faith failed as the faith in Japan and for that failure Japan embarked upon a policy that took the lives of millions and so devastated Asia that I don't know that there could ever be a recovery and even for itself.

So remarkably critical things that we're going to examine in great detail as we go on in these days. What distinguishes Israel's God and their faith against the religions about them is that not only does God speak to man, he also does so before his great deeds in history which disclosed the final goal in advance. He knows the future because he controls history.

The element of revelation is to be found in the oracle proclaiming the event rather than in the event itself. You don't have to wait for the event. The proclamation of the event is as vivid and as real for the prophet as the event when it will come.

He sees it as a present thing and because he can proclaim it in that vividness people have the opportunity to be spared the reality of the event because it comes to them in advance as it is prophetically proclaimed and this is one of the profound distinctions or distinctives of Israelite religion. When Peter on the day of Pentecost said this is that when he took the events that they were seeing and equated it with the prophecy of Joel he instantly knew what he was speaking about a judgment that had prophesied over Israel and therefore be saved and come out from that untold generation before that judgment falls. What must we do to be saved? How do we get to heaven? How are we to be saved from this disaster that has been

prophesied that is now at the fore because you have identified it in prophetic and apostolic authority as being that.

This is that. I don't know who I'm quoting here. The Old Testament view of the divine deed is not possible without the divine word.

It is here that we learn about Yahweh's purposes and intentions his true nature and the innermost thoughts of his heart his gifts and claims which make him different from all the other gods of the ancient near east or the far east or anywhere in the world today is what is set forth in the word, the divine word that describes the divine deed that will surely come to pass. It is here that we learn about Jehovah. It's here that we learn about the God that is God.

And maybe we can say if not here, nowhere else. If you'll not learn of God from the proclamation of his word of deeds that he says will come to pass of which you are now being forewarned by a messenger sent you'll just simply not learn of God. His true nature, the innermost thoughts of his heart and so on that make him to differ from all other gods of the ancient and pagan world is the issue of the proclaiming of him in his word and of the deeds that will come to pass.

So apostolic or prophetic proclamation is the name of the game. And just as our prayer could not exceed the truth of our relationships so also proclamation cannot exceed the truth of the reality of the life who is the proclaimer. If he's a holiday inn specialist who flits from place to place and is a kind of celebrity himself enjoying a certain kind of celebrity status he's not likely to be the oracle of a kind that can convey the reality of God as God.

For he himself to that degree is divorced from it. And it's for that reason that Elijah is a wilderness prophet. He had to be so separated from any of the amenities of apostate Israel's civilization so that he could address it as one who had not participated or partaken of it.

Daniel could not eat from the king's table. It wasn't that he was watching his waistline. He was safeguarding his prophetic veracity and his authenticity to be a separated man for had he condescended even so much as to enjoying that very rich table and its delicacies he would have been in a subtle way compromised and diffused in his proclamation.

He could not have been to the king what the king heard from him in the warning that was prophetic in its clarity and uncompromising if he had compromised at the table. This is our everlasting instruction if we ourselves are charged with prophetic responsibility either in having the calling or being called to fellowship and relationship with that one or those who do. This is our responsibility to be keenly aware of the radical kind of separation if we're going to address the idolatrous world we ourselves have to be separated from it.

That's why we need the body because what may not be obvious to us is obvious to another and we need that other's counsel and insight for no man will have a total clarity and he will be particularly susceptible to the things that are amenable to his own temperament and he'll justify those things as somehow even being God-given. For example, Jim, Baker Jim, the other Jim in California Swagger Swagger justified his sinful indulgences as almost being a God-given amenity because he works so hard for God and gives himself so totally to God's purposes that the Lord has allowed him to have this kind of compensatory enjoyment. That's how men will rationalize and justify themselves in their sin all the more if their use is that prominent.

So where were the men related to them who would have told him long before that's a no-no? That kind of justification will lead you into disaster. God is not giving you that kind of an accommodation and beside that you don't need it and beside that you don't deserve it. What, you're working so hard for God? Was that something you're doing or the grace of God is making possible? To whom are you attributing that work that you justify this kind of indulgence? Why weren't there men around him who could have spoken those things? Because he was not in a community.

He was in a ministry of multi-million dollar kind whose salaries could be paid to those who would never ever dare raise those questions lest they would lose their own privilege benefits. So the answer to your statement is a prophet of all callings needs the protection and the provision that comes from being rightly related in a body where people can relate to him and address him not as some exalted servant but as a brother in the faith because there are things that he cannot see for himself that can only be received through others if he will receive them and others will love him enough to speak it. I'm in advance of myself now to say that the last word that sums up everything that you're saying about what is righteous and true in ministry fellowship church is the word worship.

That that's not a practice or a skill or a method but the summation of authentic faith corporately upheld. And it's no accident that the statement by which Paul and Barnabas were released for their first apostolic sending is when the fellowship at Antioch was found worshipping the Lord together. That is to say, the word worship designates coming to a place of authenticity in relationship with each other and before God in which the faith has been rightly maintained and held.

And when God sees that then he calls for the separation of men who will now bring that reality and that authenticity to others who are still languishing before idols. That's what gave Paul his power to break men from their idols to serve the living God because he was totally separated from the most subtle idolatries of himself even the idolatry of ministry even the idolatry of being Jewish. And where did this radical separation take place? In the fellowship at Antioch where they had come to a place in view of all of their differences they were found worshipping the Lord together.

What Jesus declared to be in spirit and in truth. Right, in spirit and in truth. And we'll come back to this.

That worship is that one word that encapsulates the whole reality of the faith that God is after. So, where am I? This thing about prophetic proclamation. Right, in spirit and in truth.

And we'll come back to this. That worship is that one word that encapsulates the whole reality of the faith that God is after. So, where am I? This thing about prophetic proclamation that sets forth God as he really is.

The western missionaries of Japan had no prophetic consciousness about that. They had no consciousness of such a function toward the nation in which they labored. Their whole missionary goal was more, what's the word? Rudimentary, more elementary, more establishing churches, church schools, performing functions.

In a valid way, but they had no larger view of the significance of the church in its prophetic role. And therefore there was not a Daniel-like sense of obligation to convey or communicate the larger sense of Israel's God as king of kings and sovereign over all. The whole object of the dream that the king of Babylon had was to teach him that there's a God who is God over all and who sets up kings and deposes them and that he had to recognize the sovereignty of this king of kings.

The missionary church in Japan could not convey this. Therefore the emperor was never challenged about his presumptions to be deity. Therefore, no authority nor ability to do that.

Their whole preoccupation in Japan as it was in the America from which they came, or the western countries from which they came, was the perpetuation and preservation of their own religious institutions unharassed by governmental restriction. They had only a limited view of their function, which really was the mentality that they brought with them from the nations from which they were sent. They lacked this larger view of a role, of a Daniel-like role that might have saved Japan from itself.

I would say that the unspoken motif of American Christianity, even at its best charismatic form, is the perpetuation of itself. Whatever it takes to preserve but to perpetuate itself because it becomes a self-perpetuating institution with offices and functions that need to be maintained, it becomes a thing unto itself and for itself. It becomes the thing in itself.

And by virtue of that, it has no possibility of being a Daniel in its own nation or to others. And the missionaries that came out of the West came out of that environment and merely transposed that narrow definition of Christianity into the Japan to which they came, which had not the power to confront, challenge, let alone defeat the Shinto, Buddhist, idolatrous things that led Japan to nationalism, militarism, war and death. This is expensive, guys.

We're not talking about competing religions and the advantage if you're subscribing to the truth. We're talking about the failure to communicate the truth and to win them to it is going to end in colossal disaster and international catastrophe from which perhaps they will never recover until the millennium comes and as was read to us yesterday, when there'll be healing from the tree of life, from the leaves for all nations. They'll go with their wounds and their sores and their cancers until that healing can come to them.

But their condition is to be attributed in large measure to the failure of the Church to be the Church. Maybe we should take a look at it in conclusion, which was yesterday's psalm for me. And a kind of a strange psalm.

It sounds itself militaristic. Praise the Lord. Sing to the Lord a new song.

His praise in the assembly of the faithful. Let Israel be glad in its maker. Let the children of Zion rejoice in their king.

This isn't poetry. This isn't just the use of a word because it has a nice ring to it. The issue of king and Zion is at the heart of Israelite faith and true faith.

And it's celebrated in this psalm. Let them praise his name with dancing. His praise will always be less than he deserves unless he's recognized and acknowledged as king.

And not only over Israel, but over all to the ends of the earth. The western missionaries to Japan had not this concept. They could not project it.

They could not communicate it. And therefore they could not challenge the false emperor Shinto religion that commanded the devotion and the allegiance of the whole nation. Only this knowledge of God in this way can compete with the false deities of the world's religions.

Let them praise his name. That's not just his moniker. His name is what he is in himself.

In the summation of his character and all of his divine distinctives. And you can't praise him unless you know him in that fullness. Your praise will be the measure of that knowledge.

It will be a cheapy praise or a charismatic praise. It will be a verbal praise. It will be a technique, a method.

Unless we have this sense of God as king in Zion. And we're not going to obtain it unless we invest ourselves in the Hebrew scriptures and in the prophets and in the psalmists who knew him in this way and conveyed to us that sense. For our contemporary world and our contemporary Christianity simply does not know it.

And if you come to this you yourself will become a strange presence within the church. You'll be the soft sun sticking out. You'll be a stranger in exile.

You'll be a pilgrim. You're not one of the boys. You don't go along.

There's something strange about you. You see something. You act differently.

You have this exalted notion of God that requires such an absoluteness and freedom from compromise. You're careful about not eating from the king's table. That will mark you.

And Christians themselves will be your opposition and even those within your own household. To be able to sing like this does not come without a price. And singing is ultimate worship to God.

Singing. I don't just mean putting something to music or nice melodies. Singing.

If speaking is a sacrament what is singing? And what it says sing to the Lord in melodies and songs and hymns. It's not talking about singing the present familiar tunes. It's composing your own.

Can you compose your own to the Lord? Because you have such an exalted sense of the magnitude of God as God that merely to say praise doesn't do it. You've got to sing praise. And to sing praise in familiar melody does not do it.

It has to come out of your own soul and out of your own guts. This is worship. And this is the issue of faith.

This is the church. When they worshipped the Lord together they were not singing from an overhead projector. It may well be that everyone who was worshipping the Lord together was singing his own melody.

But the melodies were harmonious and congruent one with the other. Black and white, Hebrew and Gentile, Roman and Mediterranean and all of the diversity. Their worship was one worship but it was uniquely their own.

It has to be because you can't get this stamped off the assembly line. It's got to be your own. It's got to be personal.

It's got to be the reality in which you have come by the intensity of your own search and because you yourself will not be placated and satisfied with something less. Your love of God as he becomes known in his greater measure deserves and something is summoned up that is more than with which you would have been satisfied. It's not your enjoying the melody that's at issue but him being celebrated in the way appropriate to his kingship as the Lord of all and the King of Kings.

And that all the earth shall sing such praises to his name and to his glory is your passion. That's the reason why you're knocking yourself out. That's the reason why you're spent and willing to be spent and don't measure anything in terms of how it affects you and will you have a retirement and what your age is and can your body take it.

You're jealous that his praise might go out to all the ends of the earth for he's the creator of the earth and he deserves that recognition and respect for what he has made. That's the faith. And we have to say that in that light however I want to respect and my heart goes out to these men the missionaries in Japan and the churches they raised up it fell so grievously short of this reality.

The greatest text of that in my opinion, Act 16 Paul and Silas brought to the marketplace before the rulers stripped and beaten to a pulp brought into the inner dungeon handcuffed and put in chains where they're sure to contract gangrene that a sentence of public beating and humiliation was really a death sentence. No one survived that.

And it says at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God and the prisoners heard them and suddenly there was a great earthquake and the bars of the prison were loosed and the manacles of men fall off and the prison keeper thinking that the prisoners had fled was ready to kill himself because he's a little flunky not wanting to jeopardize his pension and Paul cried out take it easy, we're all here we're not going anywhere we were not bound before we're not bound now to be free in Christ was free indeed even with chains on and the man called for light and fell before them and cried out what must I do to be saved how do I obtain what you have this is freedom this is ultimate freedom from fear of security I've been trying to keep my nose clean and play the game right and do

what the authorities have required and you're you in the midst of your suffering unto death are singing praises unto God because why because Paul and Silas counted it a privilege to bear that suffering when the devil was telling them that they really missed it that, that, that, that, that you should have stayed in Asia where God was heading to the church daily and you came to Europe and what do you got one woman convert who sells purple and you delivered one woman who was making gain for her masters by her occultic power big deal, you missed the Lord you really ought to be repenting because you thought you were hearing God and look where it's like you went to a dungeon and your colleagues don't even know where you're going to die there at midnight the darkest hour when the Satan has every

opportunity to crunch you with a sense of your failure and look what you got for your labors and you're coming to the end it's a disaster of failure Paul and Silas sang praises unto the Lord and the prisoners heard them and I'm expecting when I and as I say when I preach this every one of those prisoners to be in heaven you can't hear that praise in the midst of adversity and not be converted that's either madness or glorious reality of the ultimate kind that commands not only your respect but your submission and that's going to be our test in the last days to worship God not in our comfort and our convenience but in our adversity and in our suffering Paul and Silas were capable of that because they had this kind of relationship with the Lord it's apostolic and it's the thing to which

we're called also so let them praise his name with dancing making melody to him with tambourine and lyre stringed instrument for the Lord takes a pleasure in his people he adorns the humble with victory I'm concerned with what gives the Lord pleasure I want to know what delights him let the faithful exult in glory let them sing for joy on their couches let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged sword in their hands to execute this is what our sisters were praying to to execute vengeance on the nations and

punishment on the people the goyim the unregenerate who have resisted and refused the Lord's saving message to bind their kings with fetters and their nobles with chains of iron to execute on them the judgment decree this is glory for all his faithful ones praise the

Lord and I have to confess saints I don't know how to interpret this it sounds so not in keeping with the whole ethos of the humility of the faith that men should exult because they can put men in irons and fetters and bring them to judgment as not only a privilege but the ultimate privilege a mark of the faith and this is good stuff because we talked about prophetic as bringing the word of God that warns of judgment and interprets it as judgment but here now the ultimate distinction is bringing the judgment itself so there's something even higher than the prophetic proclamation but the actualization of that judgment doesn't say how but it's the privilege of those who praise God who are his who are concerned for what pleases him this is the glory for all his faithful ones to execute on

them the judgment decree and I have to say I don't know what that means I suspect that something like you shall be a rod of iron and break all of the vessels the smiths smithereens is not what we think it means but that there's a spiritual way of understanding that that is a destruction that is yet gentle and benevolent and redemptive you're breaking them to pieces not in some violent retributive act but you're breaking them to pieces in order that they might be reformed and found in a fashion that would glorify God forever and constitute their redemption I have to bring my knowledge of God into this context and say this is not an invitation to brutality this is an invitation to redemption to bring judgment to the nations is not to condemn them but to release them it's a judgment that's

redemptive and it's our privilege and our glory to those who can praise him so you love the judgments of God you have proclaimed the judgments of God and you've proclaimed them with authority and now in the last analysis you actually execute them in a word God is giving you the province of his own deity you're acting as God for God in his own authority these are the ultimate acts of God and it's conferred and given to us without fear that we ourselves are so much going to touch the glory let alone steal it because we have no identity outside of God and therefore we can be safely entrusted even to act for God in this and to have this ultimate privilege of performing his judgments and not lead to our self-exaltation because we have long ago been crucified to anything that would have been

our own self-loathing hard to believe that such a one has not himself received God's judgments for himself in the process of his coming to that kind of maturity and youth and not only received them but received them gladly not belligerently I guess I got through his God but thank you Lord for your judgments on life as the book of Proverbs says those who receive correction are wise and that the way of correction is the way of life but what is correction if not judgment and is it not humiliating in his first expression that we're found out and called short and something has been identified for us but to receive that gladly and even joyously as privilege is to put us on the way to the fulfillment spoken in this song to resist it is to remove us from any such ultimate use for which we will

have eternal regret the correction of God in the church is the most marvelous expression of his love and I'm sure that there would not have been a Daniel without it not have been an Elijah without it and there could not have ever been a prophet of God who is not first himself in the course of his walk come under the judgment and scrutiny of God and received it our hearts go out my God for these missionaries in Japan God bless them God bless those who are still laboring in that nation who have learned to be satisfied with a little handful and monotonous and predictable services no active evangelism or is just not known, not accepted and have just continued with the perpetuation of their institutions and we know that

you're not finished with Japan and we pray my God that you'll raise up

even in this last hour those who can be sent and to address not so much the nation as the church in that nation to bring it to the place where it must come if the nation itself is yet to be affected we're not going to allow history to end and that Japan should live perpetually in its shame that even now is not willing in its textbooks to acknowledge the guilt and sin of its own past and are writing textbooks that take liberties with the truth and omit all sections of the horror and the brutality that Japan performed because it does not want to take the risk of losing the patriotism of its youth that its national objective is more important than truth itself that the nation therefore is still its own idolatry for truth is God and so I'll always remember to be haunted by that man that I met

that first day in Odessa half a dozen years ago in that national holiday when people were out flying kites and I passed this man a beautiful man my heart went out to him I coveted him for the kingdom of God I said but alack and alas how can I communicate I had hardly walked past him then the man said mister do you know how to fly a kite? wow this guy speaks English and I went face to face with him and we had a conversation he wanted to know what was I doing in Japan why was I in Osaka and of course it led to the whole explanation and my calling, my service and so on and I said I'm also an author I've written a few books I said one of the books is called The Spirit of Truth and of course you know what truth is don't you? and the man went blank it was like his eyes shut off he lost all kind

of sense the fact of the matter was he did not know what truth is truth is not known in Japan accurate in their measurements yes Hondas and Accords and everything like precision but precision is not truth it's not moral truth and moral truth is reality in life there was no comprehension and I realized these people have really forsaken the word truth and then I learned that the word sin is not even in their language so Lord Japan will be a trophy for you where everything is stacked against you the failure of the church the predominance of this nationalistic idolatry still that won't allow its textbooks even to begin to state the truth of its own past for patriotism sake and we invite you my God for your mercy to save that nation from judgment and to bring men who can proclaim that yes

there will be if you will not acknowledge the God who has been making historically attempts to win you to himself and you will not may the history of Israel be a redemptive message for Japan that the God who did not withhold judgment from his own nation and his own people shall he withhold it from the nations shall they be exempt of the harsh judgments that God has allowed to fall upon Israel itself that they might be instructed oh send messengers my God that our messengers indeed who are fearless and bold and bring the word of God in authority and power to wake the sleeping and to raise the dead and to save them my God from judgments that must inevitably come may we be such may we be sent for this may we be participants in fellowships my God that are in the truth and worship you and sing

melodies unto you my God that we might be the senders of those who proclaim such words bless us in these days for the seriousness of what you are about with us and we thank you we have many ability more to express gratitude in Yeshua's holy name and God's people said Amen

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