

# (Becoming a Prophetic Church) 1. the Necessity of the Cross

by Art Katz

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*Art Katz's sermon explores the necessity of the cross and the profound implications of suffering and redemption in the Christian faith.*

**Duration:** 46:04

**Scripture:** Psalm 49:7, Isaiah 53:5

**Topics:** "The Cross", "Suffering and Redemption"

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## Description

Art Katz emphasizes the necessity of the cross in understanding both the individual and collective destiny of Israel and the church. He reflects on the significance of suffering, particularly in relation to the crucifixion of Jesus, and how it serves as a ransom for sin. Katz argues that without a deep comprehension of the cross and its implications, both Jews and Gentiles risk missing the profound truth of God's redemptive plan. He warns that the future suffering of Israel will mirror the suffering of Christ, revealing the depths of God's mercy and justice. Ultimately, Katz calls for a prophetic understanding of suffering as essential for fulfilling God's purpose in the world.

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## Transcript

Good morning, Saints. I'm totally uncomfortable, out of place. So this is an adjustment for me, so I might bumble a bit until I find my stride in the Lord in place.

So be patient. I'm not accustomed to this environment very often. So Lord, this is nothing for you.

You're not a God to be intimidated by anything. And you're the sovereign God who has arranged this occasion. So here we are, Lord, at the commencement, and appeal to you again, as we always do, the great Alpha and Omega, to give us a point of beginning, in keeping with the end that is already determined by you, which I don't know.

So let me not in any way transgress, impose, assert my humanity, but just be a piece of dust that you're pleased to employ, that these people can receive the full measure, Lord, of your intention, because we share with them the sense of gravity and significance for this time. And only you know the full import, what will flow, and the consequences that will issue from this time of speaking. So be the Lord of it all, my God, from commencement to conclusion.

And thank you for the privilege, which is ours before these people, my God, to be a voice for your speaking. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.

Beginning is tough. If you'll ever one day be a so-called public speaker, you'll find out. No past experience prepares you for the present one.

And men like myself have such a heightened sense of the significance of things that if this congregation was reduced to a tenth its size, I would still be inwardly trembling. It's not the numbers. It's the occasion, which is once and for all and will not be given again.

So we proceed tremulously, word by word. And so all I have as a point of beginning is this morning's devotional psalm. I don't know if you're in the practice of reading the psalms as your devotional experience morning by morning, but that's my practice.

And I don't play spiritual roulette, opening the Bible and just finding something at random. But today is the 19th day, is that right, of this month? And so in my cycle of readings, I'm on Psalm 49 and invite you to turn with me there. Reading from the Bible I was required to purchase at the Lutheran seminary that has many deficits but gives ample space and margins for notation.

So if you find me expressing something that's at variance with your edition, you supplement what is wanting here. It's almost a feminist Bible. This came in an age when women wanted to correct the church for its sexist attitude, and they overcorrected in some places.

Perhaps you'll hear if I use this Bible more than this occasion. But Psalm 49 reads, Hear this, all you peoples, give ear all inhabitants of the earth, both low and high, rich and poor together. My mouth shall speak wisdom.

The meditation of my heart shall be understanding. I will incline my ear to a proverb. I will solve my riddle to the music of the harp.

Why should I fear in times of trouble when the iniquity of my persecutors surrounds me? Those who trust in their wealth and boast of the abundance of their riches. Truly, no ransom avails for one's life. There is no price one can give to God for it.

For the ransom of life is costly and can never suffice. That one should live on forever and never see the pit. When we look at the wise, they die.

Fool and dolt perish together and leave their wealth to others. Their graves are their homes forever, their dwelling places to all generations. Though they named lands their own, mortals cannot abide in their pomp.

They are like the animals that perish. Such is the fate of the foolhardy, the end of those who are pleased with their lot. Like sheep, they are appointed for Sheol or hell.

Death shall be their shepherd. Straight to the grave they descend and their form shall waste away. Sheol or hell shall be their home.

But God will ransom my soul from the power of hell, for he will receive me. Do not be afraid when some become rich, when the wealth of their houses increase. For when they die, they will carry nothing away.

Their wealth will not go down after them. Though in their lifetime they count themselves happy, for you are praised when you do well for yourself. They will go to the company of their ancestors who will never again see the light.

Mortals cannot abide in their pomp. They are like animals that perish. Amen.

My dear Danish wife has a phrase that I frequently cite. What do you think of them apples? What do you think of this psalm? It sounds very much like a New Testament selection rather than an old. And I don't know if you've been made aware that often something from the psalms and certainly from the prophets has a greater incisiveness and brings dimensions of completeness and depth of understanding that even exceeds New Testament scripture.

And so we would be fools to compartmentalize and to allow the Old Testament so-called to suffer at the expense of the New when they are so much in tandem. And here's an instance that struck me this morning early in my reading it of the sense of eternity, the sense of what follows death that of which we ourselves need to be reminded because we believe but we don't believe adequately. We're not persuading men knowing the terror of God.

We don't have a grip on hell. It's not a polite subject, and we are of all things polite Christians. So it's there.

It's factored in somewhere in our catalog of doctrines to be approved, but we don't believe it vehemently. We certainly don't believe it as the psalmist does who makes clear what the destiny of many will be and that somehow that the Lord has quickened to me that I should make this a point of beginning. And it's not as if I have now rigidly, thoroughly studied it and I'm prepared now to expound.

I'm just reading it now for, so to speak, a second time this morning and just foolishly trusting that somehow this note needs to be struck or else nothing can really adequately follow either about Israel or the church unless we have taken into our deepest consideration what is the final issue of everything, heaven or hell from which wealth does not preserve us or keep us. More likely it will be an incentive to take the wrong direction and suffer the tragic consequence. And I read this this morning as I always often do through the prism of my preoccupation with my own Jewish people because they ought to be found among the wealthy and not necessarily financed, though certainly they're conspicuous in that place, but wealth of intellect, wealth of culture, wealth of self-righteousness, of self-exaltation, of correctness, of, I don't know what.

We Jews have a market on all of those things that make for self-esteem in the modern world of which we ourselves are the principal architects. As you know, if you just survey the giants of the 20th century like Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, Einstein, and a whole host of other and lesser men including even Steven Spielberg and Eisner of Walt Disney Studios, and the whole spate of CEOs and men of place and prominence in the world of commerce and culture who are persuasive and influential, these are rich men. But according to this psalm, that may be a foreboding of an unhappy eternal destiny because in verse 10 says, When we look at the wise, they die.

Fool and dolt perish together and leave their wealth to others. Even though they have named lands as their own or businesses or corporations or even a nation entitled Israel, there's no guarantee that they will not fall to the same destiny as the poor, the obscure, the fool, and the dolt perish together with those who think themselves wise. Because the issue is ransom.

The issue is atonement. The issue is redemption which even this Old Testament psalmist intuitively and senses more deeply than we who subscribe to New Testament doctrine of salvation that there's an issue of ransom. There's something that's got to take place that is from God or else we will perish with the dolts, with the fools, the wise and the rich together except that we're ransomed.

Something has got to come at the expense of another that saves us from an eternal destiny of regret and shame or hell. Are you guys following me so far? Yeah? Okay. Why would God single out a note of this kind that just coincidentally happens to be my devotional reading for this morning? Because if we don't sufficiently reckon on this eternal destiny and what is required to save us from it no matter how we're endowed intellectually or financially then we can't understand the lengths to which God will go to save men from such an eternal lament.

We will balk and find fault with God of what he will require. The death of his own son which we haven't adequately considered and have sentimentalized and I'm not sure that the film *The Passion* has done God's service in commending to audiences the awesomeness of what the ransom was that was required for our redemption. Certainly the Jewish community has not the faintest sense of this because you can only understand it in proportion to the awareness of your own sin.

You can't understand it by watching a film or reading a biblical text or somebody witnessing to you. There needs to be a depth of comprehension of the truth of your own condition though you think yourself wise or wealthy or else the issue of redemption through ransom is just some kind of peculiar doctrine that Gentiles have seized upon in the formulation of their own strange faith but has no coherence or meaning for Jews. Let alone that they should be required in some measure to suffer as the consequence of their sin so as to recognize the value of the ransom.

I'm saying all this to prepare you for a commencement, a beginning in these days by looking at the text of Isaiah 53 which is the critical prophetic text of how that ransom was supplied in a suffering servant. But the way in which I intend to use it and I'm not sure that I'll even begin this morning is as a description not only of that suffering servant whom we know well as those who believe but as an experience that is yet future for the nation Israel who themselves will be required to walk a road to Calvary and be marred more than any man and have no beauty that any should desire them and shall be rejected and despised of men. So there's a multiple use of the text of Isaiah 53.

Ironically, rabbis have long contended that Isaiah 53 is the description of Israel as a suffering servant nation already in its past. And I'm suggesting a new twist. It's a depiction of something future through which the nation must pass.

When I say nation, I don't just mean that political enclave in the Middle East called the State of Israel. But the nation, Jews, everywhere on the globe through a time of Jacob's trouble will be required to walk a path a road to Calvary of suffering of abuse, of rejection of a kind that has no historical point of reference other than that which Jesus himself suffered. And what Jesus himself suffered is something that we Jews have conspicuously avoided considering for 2,000 years.

There's no subject more reprehensible or repulsive than the crucifixion of Jesus. And if we give it any consideration at all it's only as a lamentable accident that might have been avoided if this political misfit had not rubbed Roman authorities in the wrong way and suffered an unhappy but unnecessary death. We Jews have failed to reckon on the significance of the crucifixion of our own Messiah and the fact that he suffered such a death makes him yet a more loathsome and reprehensible object of consideration and all

the more reason not to consider that he might be the Messiah of Israel or let alone Israel's own God.

There's something totally offensive about the cross which is not haphazard or accidental but part of God's deliberate wisdom so that the wise will stumble over it or be offended by it and the only way in which Israel shall apprehend that suffering as its atonement and as its ransom is by some measure experiencing the reality of that suffering itself. Am I getting too fancy? Can't help it. But I will, by the grace of God try and expound and come back again I'm giving a general overview and a statement so that later on you'll be able to follow if I take this up as we examine the text.

So I'll repeat myself. The issue of the crucifixion of Jesus is the issue of ransom is the issue of atonement which if it is not appropriated by Jews or Gentiles they will go into Sheol or hell. Believest thou this? There's no complementary secondary thing that's available to Jews by virtue of some Abrahamic covenant that saves them from such a necessity.

If that were so Paul would not have anguished at the commencement of Romans chapter 9 that he would wish himself a curse for his brethren's sake that they might know Christ. Why would he be willing to exchange his salvation that they might obtain it if they already had some kind of a measure of a complementary security that obviates the necessity to receive this Christ this suffering Messiah this suffering servant this atonement, this ransom. Got the picture? My wife always adds a syllable.

Picture. She's from Denmark. Bless her.

So for 2,000 years Jews have crossed the street to avoid the shadow of the cross on church spires to fall upon them and there's no subject more detestable more to be shunned than the issue of a crucified Christ. And I'm afraid that the Passion film for as many Jews who may have seen it and there are not many will repulse them rather than inform them and that if I were making the film I would have done something much more to make the atrocity of bloodshed and suffering and flagellation that was so brutally depicted understandable in the context of redemption and not just put there to win our Catholic sympathy or to wring out a few more drops of commiseration of a schmaltzy kind that does not bring redemption but pity and maybe even will encourage that old thing about Christ-killer See what I mean?

So what am I saying?

That I believe that God wants me to begin with an examination of Isaiah 53 not that we should rehearse the sufferings through which Jesus has already passed but that we should anticipate the sufferings through which Israel will pass not those in the state alone though certainly themselves but Jews even in Kansas City or Chicago or New York or Honolulu or Singapore or where so ever we are proliferated in the earth there will be a time of Jacob's trouble wherever Jacob is and that trouble is described for us in many places in the prophets but Isaiah 53 is a remarkable remarkably apt description of that suffering because it bears such a remarkable correspondence to that through which Jesus himself passed and so I have coined the phrase that will stretch your American high school mentality

junior college if you've gone that far and that is the mutuality of suffering there's something about suffering that reveals and maybe you're too young to have had occasion to notice and maybe you never will be required but Israel will be required because it's in the identification of finding themselves cast out and despised and rejected of men and being marred more than any man being beaten to a pulp fleeing from violence that in the course of that suffering something shall break upon their consciousness that this bears a remarkable resemblance to that one who is described in Isaiah 53 who suffered in a like way 2,000

years before us only the difference is that he went as a lamb to his slaughter silently while we also shall howl with complaint and all the rest but nevertheless as I hope

to show you in the text the voice changes it begins with a narration then it's Israel itself speaking then God himself interjects and there's a recognition oh it was for this reason for our transgressions that he bore those stripes for our iniquity something about suffering in a comparable or almost identical way with the Lord and Messiah who preceded the nation reveals to the nation the meaning of the suffering which we have shunned for 2,000 years to consider and I don't have the ability except God would give me a special grace to say to you that to miss the crucifixion of Jesus is to miss God is to miss the most profound single revelation given of God in all of the manifold aspects of his deity and all of the complex statement of his triune Godhead because the Father, the Son and the

Holy Spirit are all expressed and involved in this remarkable debacle called the crucifixion of Christ the one who gave himself without spot as a sacrifice as the atonement as the what's that other word? the ransom he did so by the eternal spirit not by human courage and he did it so before the face of the Father whose presence departed from him that he would cry out my God, my God why hast thou forsaken me? in one historic moment of time in a prescribed place and it called Calvary something is transacted and takes place that is a once and for all eternal statement of God as God suffering for sin and placating and obviating the necessity for a righteous judgment or else God would lose his character as God if he looks the other way and makes no issue of sin and righteousness he's required

as God to deal with it justly and righteously but it requires ultimate sacrifice that neither man nor animal can provide that only he himself can provide and in providing it himself his own nature is revealed in his humility and his love and many other aspects I'm just trifling here I'm just touching and playing with the surface of something that deserves the deepest examination or we nullify ourselves as church if we ourselves have not been apprehended by the enormity of what is represented at the cross if we trivialize that the faith is lost we become only a culture of enjoyment of a kind peculiar to ourselves but we have no value outside this building if we trivialize the cross if we have not apprehended its depths we have nothing, we are nothing, we have no message we cannot, like

Paul, persuade men knowing the terror of God we cannot begin to depict to them the enormity of sin by what was required to expiate it because sin will never reveal itself as sin its nature is to conceal itself as sin what reveals sin as sin is the judgment that is required to expiate it so something like the Nazi holocaust six million Jews annihilated and a million and a half children what possible reason could God have allowed a devastation of that kind for which there is no other historical accompaniment than the crucifixion of Jesus himself there are two holocausts in history one is the crucifixion of Jesus and the other is the crucifixion of the Jew in the Nazi time and both have to do with sin and judgment so if we had our heads screwed on right as Jews the question that we ought to

be asking which we have not asked and it takes a character like myself to have the chutzpah to begin to suggest that maybe we need to consider that God was present that it was not an historical accident an aberration of history for which we will never have explanation and simply have to bear it God was there and how do you reconcile that with God of love that he was there and present and allowed that atrocity and that genocidal annihilation to take place how then is he a God of love how is he a God of mercy how is he a God of justice a God of righteousness that he is aware and knows and could have intervened and did not and more than that not only was he observant but it was a fulfillment of his own word given in the foundational mosaic scriptures of Deuteronomy and Leviticus now being

fulfilled which he said would befall us in the latter days well that's to say that that's astonishment is to miss is not to find yet the right word we were taken around Olathe yesterday I'm wearing the pants that were provided as gift the best I've ever owned I hope you're impressed but in the course of going to this very exclusive men's haberdashery we passed equally exclusive businesses and shopping malls hey don't you guys ever get tired of shopping malls my God they're prolific it's hard to find a patch of grass that is not somehow attached to commerce you guys are living in la la land and I'm just wondering how can I succeed for those who are have reconciled themselves and live comfortably with the vista outside this place that is that is commonplace and normative in Kansas and other

middle class America in general and speak to you about the atrocity of the cross or the meaning of the holocaust the devastations that God allows you've got to be jarred in your brain box and if you are not and you sit and nod amiably I have failed until you have fallen out of your seat foaming at the mouth you have not yet understood the magnitude of either the cross or the holocaust and the symmetry that they provide in history that the one is the key to the understanding of the other and for the want of that understanding both of the crucifixion of Jesus and the suffering of Jews in the Nazi time there's yet another holocaust to come through which you yourself will live and be either an observer or a participant or a victim or run with your tail between your legs away and into apostasy

so I'm wondering about you will you make it in that time if you have not some iron in your soul by a proper apprehension of what has already been given in history and will yet be given again in greater measure as we say in Brooklyn wiser than it was at the first how do you say worse art? because Jesus himself said that if this time were not cut short no flesh would survive but for the elect's sake this time will be cut short for there's coming a time of trouble upon the nation such as it has never before known nor will again know if he's speaking about a calamity of a holocaust that is yet future that is greater than anything that we have previously known as Jews it will have to exceed the Nazi holocaust and if when he comes and his feet set on the Mount of Olives to save Israel from its

final extremity when all nations come against Jerusalem to destroy it and two-thirds have already perished and the final third passes through the fire if that's the ratio of Jewish survival not only in the land but over the earth we're talking about the decimation of 10 million Jews in a period of time shorter than the Nazi holocaust three and a half years and what are you saying cats that this is a necessary and final chastisement for the nation yes and that most Jews will not survive it yes and that the redeemed of the Lord who survive and return to Zion with everlasting joy in their heads and mourning and sighing fleeing away will only constitute a remnant yes and that remnant will constitute the redeemed nation yes and that redeemed nation allows for the return of its king in the holy

hill of Zion and becomes the accompaniment of a messianic kingdom a theocratic rule that has its center in Zion and can only be occupied by a son of David on the throne of David and requires a redeemed nation to be the the platform the locus of that rule yes and you don't understand the word that I'm saying yes I don't know why Mike Bickle brings me into these situations that this suffering this future chastisement which beggars our minds as modern people who have a heart of concern and sympathy for Israel and for the Jew that God will again allow such a devastation as will eclipse the Nazi holocaust some of you will forsake the faith because of that you'll not be able to reconcile that with what you understand of God because your understanding is eminently too shallow it will be an

offense for you that he would allow that kind of devastation again and yet reconcile that with God as just righteous, merciful and loving because it's in actions of that kind that the reality of God as God is most

profoundly revealed got that? something is revealed of God in the ultimacy of judgment that is not revealed in any other way and when it's revealed what we think is harsh and severe in judgment is seen also as righteous and that judgment itself becomes a mercy if it will keep men from Sheol and hell got the picture? only if you understand the devastation of hell can you begin to understand the lengths to which God will go to keep men from it as their eternal fate but if you don't see it you'll be offended that God will go as far as he will go and other things can be said that

Israel's calling as a nation of priests and a light unto the world requires this suffering because although you're too young to understand and it will never be required of you you cannot be a priest except through suffering you can be a technician you can be on the worship team and witness and fast but priestliness that requires a barefooted identification with the condition of the people to whom you come as God's representative and authority to intercede between earth and heaven requires a demeanor and a disposition of humility and brokenness, especially if you're coming to those who you're former historic tormentors like Iraq Saudi Arabia Egypt where we Jews are called to be a nation of priests and a light to the world which includes Islamic nations and Palestinians and we cannot be

priests to those people except something has come into our national experience that has affected a brokenness that shall never heal that we will carry as a permanent disability like Jacob with the what you may call it in his hip who was left lame to become Israel so must the present state called Israel but more truly presently Jacob, become Israel by being crippled by being submitted to suffering by being brought through an Isaiah 53 experience of devastation rightly and justly required of God in his chastisement as a father who will not spare sons who are called to a priestly identity and service to the nations in his eternal kingdom well get the tape Lord mercy on this people why do you always have me like this to exacerbate and irritate and stretch and there's no way that the brightest

of them can understand the breadth of what I'm already expressing except you give a mercy to comprehend let alone a mercy to participate let alone a mercy to extend themselves to this Jewish nation when it shall be proliferated even through Kansas City especially the suburbs thereof that will wipe their faces in the blood and will not be offended that they're marred more than any man or that they constitute a stink in flight not having the ability even so much as to wash or to shower or change clothes this is going to make an ultimate requirement of the church that is the church to be present in the earth in this final episode that transfigures the surviving nation to come into its eternal destiny to which they were called which has never been uh removed because it says in Romans 11 the

gift and calling of God is irrevocable therefore it stands therefore it must be fulfilled or the God who gave the call is rendered a non-God because he cannot fulfill the calling to which he had given his people to which they must come even against their own contrariness and unwillingness to be a nation of priests and a light to the world who would much rather succeed in business and in the film industry or rap culture recordings that rake in the millions that's what they'd rather do but you have a calling which if they don't fulfill it how then are you God you have a covenant which if it's not on it how then are you God that the redeemer the ransom will come out of Zion and take transgression from Jacob if you don't do that and don't perform that even against Jacob's unwillingness how

then are you God the issue of Israel is the issue of God as God and it's got to be demonstrated before the face of all nations and that's why this drama is not just going to take place in what is called Israel it's going to take place in Asia and Latin America because you said in Amos chapter 9 I will sift you through all nations and not the least of the reasons is that all nations who themselves have ignored the great single

historic episode of the crucifixion of Jesus or have turned it into a triviality by hanging a cross at the front of their churches or around their necks or their athletes wear them will for the first time have an opportunity to begin to assess that historic episode of the sufferings of Jesus for the sin of mankind through the love of the father who made of himself a

sacrifice of the only kind that could be acceptable when it will be reiterated and acted out again before the face of all nations through the suffering of the people Israel before them Thank you Lord for recording devices and I'm praying an anointing on the recording that when they hear it again and again that finally something will break in and through that this reiteration of the cross through the suffering of the people Israel is your last act of mercy not only for Israel that will come to the recognition of him who suffered before them by what they are suffering of a like kind but for the nations who have turned that great ransom and that great sacrifice into a piece of trivia or religious culture and need to see again the depth of it as it is acted out before them by the suffering of

a people in the like measure of a road to Calvary of the kind which Jesus himself trod so that Israel in her final extremity and suffering serves the purpose of God as being his witness and giving the nations one last opportunity to consider the Jesus whom they have effectually rejected even in being Christian Teach us what these things mean So Lord bless these children, rattle their cage I'm brutal Don't spare them Lord, save them my God I pray from being sweet shallow, pretty well meaning, nice kids have a heart for Israel want to witness all the rest Lord save them from that and make them effectual prophetic apostolically minded young adults who understand the necessity for suffering and are willing themselves to be made candidates because suffering is the name of the game suffering

reveals it revealed God in the sufferings of Jesus and it will reveal Jesus in the sufferings of Israel Teach us what these things mean and we thank you for the privilege of being called not just to observe this final episode in history but to be participants grant us my God wisdom, understanding mercy love for its victim people without which some will not have survived except that something comes to them from a church who share with them in that last days extremity and bear them up and are to them that provision of your mercy without which they would have perished before they came to the knowledge of the Holy One who would have saved them from Sheol and hell by the ransom of himself seal that statement Lord and help us to understand it deeply we thank you and give you praise in Jesus

name Amen Thank you If you're getting anything that's coherent it's because you've prayed You see how what kind of topic this is, what kind of mystery this is what kind of explication this requires what kind of fathoming and understanding that requires mercy even to comprehend what shall it require to participate So where is Mike?

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