

K-439 Valley of Dry Bones

by Art Katz

The sermon emphasizes the importance of the Church's role in Israel's restoration, and the need for the Church to come out and down into Israel's predicament to be Israel's salvific agent.

Duration: 1:10:49

Scripture: Joshua 1:9, Ezekiel 37:3, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:28, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Hebrews 11:1, James 1:2-4

Topics: "Dry Bones"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding and proclaiming the word of God. He acknowledges the challenges and limitations faced by believers, but encourages them to trust in the sent word from God. The speaker also highlights the significance of obedience and the need for hope in difficult times. He then transitions to discussing the topic of anti-Semitism, referencing an article that describes a new form of anti-Semitism and the need for awareness and understanding of this phenomenon.

Transcript

As we try to feel our way in and through a mystery called Zion, and even now I don't know that we have even begun partially to define it, but we need more to be apprehended by it. And in fact, in the last analysis, to become it. For if we do not become it, there'll be no deliverance for Israel.

That's the long and the short of it. For deliverance must come out of Zion, or it will not come out at all. So how do you presume to think, Art, that Zion is some kind of mysterious metaphor that refers to the Church? Well, by the same chutzpah, that tonight I'm going to suggest that the Son of Man, in Ezekiel 37, in the Valley of Dry Bones, commanded to address the bones, is equally a statement of the Church of the last days, brought to its full prophetic configuration, or those bones remain dead.

I marvel at the faith of God for you, Son of Man company, that you will come to this place of obedience, and be able to speak a word that is more than just a well-meaning and hopeful statement, for that will fall into death equally with the bones already dead, but that you'll speak with prophetic authority, the creative word that raises the dead. That you yourself, to speak like that, need to be that. You need to come into a place of resurrection reality that will not be found in that last and final moment, unless it is consistently the substance of all your moments.

So, Lord, again, you're so precious, you're so able, your remarkable power, your word and your spirit, to raise us from the dead, Lord, to bring us up out of our graves, or we will surely not bring them up out of theirs. And whatever grave we're in, by whatever name, charismatic, evangelical, cell group, it could be that also, but the life is not in a name. It's a reality.

And so, Lord, we just welcome that you would raise us up that we might raise them up. And it's a remarkable phenomenon. And who can speak of it, Lord? Who can set this forth? How well do we understand our brother Paul continually gasping, who is sufficient for these things? And we say the same.

Because what we are about tonight and in these nights is not a series of meetings or a conference or informational or inspirational something. It's an event in God whose time has come, in the locality of your choosing through the instrument that you have sent, trusting that, indeed, he's a sent one with a sent word, and that the auspices is nothing less than the throne of heaven itself. So, my God, instruct us both by what we hear, what we see, by the whole thing together in such a way, Lord, that we even invite you to ruin us.

Ruin us for anything less. Once we have tasted this kind of reality, this kind of proclamation, the word sent as event, how shall we go back to something less? And surely the time is short, and we need to go from event to event, or we will be found wanting in that moment that will so soon be upon us that is already gathering up a full head of steam and is rushing headlong toward the death of the nation Israel. So we bless you, Lord.

Come and fulfill your own heart. If you're delighted with tonight, we'll be happy also. Gratify your soul and complete your statement, Lord, that begun in that remarkable flux of frailty and indecision and not knowing and just feeling that maybe every event has to begin that way, but end it, my God, in a way that is not an end but a new beginning.

And we'll thank you and give you praise for that in Jesus' name. Amen. Okay.

So what I think, before we look at the text of Ezekiel 37, with which most of us are familiar, the Valley of Dry Bones, you can turn to it, I want to just briefly employ a recent article in a New York magazine on the new anti-Semitism. It's a remarkable summary by a Jewish writer, and I'm carrying it with me. I even spoke from it with our own fellowship before departing for this trip because it is such a concise and acute summary of a remarkable phenomenon that may not have obtained your awareness.

There's something happening in the earth, dear saints, of which you must be informed. Namely, there's a blot, dark blot, coming over the horizon, and it will fill the earth. It is a virulent hatred of the Jew.

It's not a new phenomenon. We've known that throughout our entire history. But what is new about it is the magnitude, depth of the hatred that began first with a despising of Israel or Zionism, and then it became the Jew, not only in the land but anywhere.

And as I describe it, it's not a gutter phenomenon. That's what anti-Semitism has characteristically been. The lowest dregs of society are susceptible and apt in their unregenerate condition to be poisoned and corrupted by the powers of darkness, to hate that people who are the delight of God, the apple of his eye, even in their unbelieving and apostate present condition.

So unconditional is his love. And so the antithesis of that love coming from his enemy is hatred for that people who designate God even in their unbelief. You need to know it.

It's moving rapidly. And what was historically always something from the gutter is now to be found in universities and places of prestige in society and left-wing movements and globalists and new coalitions with political forces, with Islamic extremism. And there's an increase of Islam itself demographically all over the world so that Jews who were once safe in France, being the largest Jewish community of Europe, 500,000, are now eclipsed by a community of Muslims of 5 million so that the rabbi of France, the chief rabbi, has to announce to the Jewish community, don't wear your yarmulkes in the street, don't wear your kippah, don't wear your head covering in the street and be identified as a Jew or you'll find your nose broken or worse.

Wear a cap. And so in the little booklet that we have written, which I think is on the back table, recently advertised in the New York Times at an extravagant sum, to put into the hands of Jewish readers in New York, some attempt to begin to give them a biblical perception of the Jewish dilemma in an increasingly hostile world. Because it's going to befall them.

It's called the time of Jacob's trouble. Wherever Jacob is, he will be found, this poison, this hatred. And so we are already foreseeing expulsion, flight, because national governments are announcing to the Jewish communities, we are no longer in a position to protect you.

How many synagogues can you station guards? And even if you do, what stops a vehicle laden with explosives from crashing in as it did in Istanbul? Twice, two synagogues within minutes of each other. Jews will not be safe anywhere in the world. The noose is tightening.

Abraham Foxman, who is the head of the Anti-Defamation League, one of the foremost organizations that report, what do they call it, monitor, this kind of phenomenon, and was himself narrowly a survivor of the past Holocaust, and wrote, has written a book called Never Again, The Threat of the New Anti-Semitism. Elie Wiesel, whom I mention in my book on the Holocaust, in a remarkable few minutes of contact that we had, where he said that he was studying the scriptures with a rabbi twice a week, and so I said to him privately, not publicly, in so much as you're studying the Hebrew scriptures, to what degree are you willing to acknowledge that our Jewish calamity, not only the Holocaust, but all past suffering, is the fulfillment of God's word of judgment, spoken of us in Deuteronomy and Leviticus. And as if he had been splashed with a bucket of icy water, he choked and stopped and looked at me with a strange stare, and he said, I refuse to consider that.

And so in my book I write, that one statement, suggestive as it is of the entire Jewish mentality, is deserving of a Holocaust. It will invite judgment to elevate yourself to a place where though the scriptures are clear of judgments that would befall us in the last days, you say, I refuse to consider that. You exalt yourself above the word of God, Nobel Prize winner though you are, and leading authority on the Holocaust, and the only single survivor of an entire family, you don't even know why that fell upon our heads, and though you have passed through it, you have not been instructed by it.

And therefore, there's yet another Holocaust to come, because you fail to rightly interpret the last. Do you want to be a prophet? Pray for me tomorrow night and Sunday, three meetings in, where is it? Santa Cruz. Santa Cruz.

In that university area, that's where the left-wingers like myself go and congregate, as I once was, but there's also a Lubavitcher Hasidic community in Santa Cruz, and they'll be out for blood. My landsmen, my kinsmen, thanking me the enemy, and opposing God's very provision for the enlightenment and for the survival. So it should be heavy.

It should be, I'm expecting, an encounter, a confrontational time, and your prayers will be significant. So what does this foxman say? He calls it, writing a book, *The Threat of the New Anti-Semitism*, and about a world's growing irrationality. Elie Wiesel, whom I've mentioned, writes in another place, or he's quoted in another place, he said, Who could have believed that only 50 years after the last catastrophe that we are again seeing this virulent hatred, worse than what it once was.

He said, It's a new madness. It is irrationality. It is madness.

And to read of it, the kinds of charges, like the myth of Gentile blood being used in Jewish matzah. Do you remember that if a child was missing in the medieval times, a Gentile child, the Jewish community was instantly accused of kidnapping and murder because they needed the blood of a Gentile child in the making of their matzah for Passover. And that was believed.

And the Black Plagues, where people died like flies, but the Jews didn't even contract the disease. Well, of course, they must have poisoned the wells. What saved them was kosher.

They refused to eat treif. They would not eat pork because pigs were the garbage disposal system of medieval Europe. They ran in the streets freely.

People dumped their litter, their garbage, out from their windows, and the swine ate it, and the people ate the swine. Only one people did not, my kinsmen, and keeping kosher saved them. And yet they were accused by their very survival, therefore, of having poisoned.

Because there's a spirit of suspicion, they're different. That's why Jesus wept over Jerusalem, because he prophetically foresaw what would be the necessary consequence of his own rejection. That we Jews would be the sore thumb, the square peg in the round hole, and we would be different and conspicuous and visible in Gentile communities that would blame us for everything that goes wrong.

So that's the sociology of anti-Semitism, although biblically and spiritually we can say that it's another aspect of the judgments that would befall us, until we acknowledge the sins of our fathers and our own, the principal one being the rejection of the Messiah whom the Father sent. I don't want to take too much time with this, but some of these quotations, what two or three years ago would have been considered hateful, naked bigotry, is now a legitimate political position. It has become politically correct to espouse anti-Semitism.

What would once have been despicable and an affront to civility is now looked upon as matter of fact. Yes, common sense concession about the evil of Israel and in the poll that was taken in Europe. What was it? The 60-something odd percent of Europeans concluded that Israel was the threat to world safety, peace, and 74% in Holland.

Nations that have been disposed toward Israel, disposed toward the Jew, have forgotten in a half century that attitude of sympathy and now are as hostile and as alienated as any people anywhere. So you need to know, something is happening and it's gathering momentum and there's no answer for it. The stunning result of the burgeoning anti-Israel, anti-Zionist emotion is a kind of politically correct anti-Semitism.

It is once again acceptable in polite society, particularly among people with left of center political views, to freely express anti-Jewish feelings. Jews are asking, why has the world turned against us and what is to be done about it? And the answer is, little or nothing. So, Israel is hurtling toward its death.

And when I say Israel, I don't just mean the political state, but world Jewry. Because Ezekiel 37, as we shall see, speaks of Jews slain and in their graves in the nations. So let's take a look at that text, which is full of remarkable symbolic significance, given in a mystical way.

Who is the Son of Man? And why is he necessary? Why couldn't God himself address the bones? Then Israel would have been forever indebted to their own God for their own resurrection. Why did he have to employ an intermediary, another party? Why? Because that's part of the great mystery of the issue of Israel and the church. And that there's a place for the church as God's salvific agent for this people.

So, it begins, there is as much reference in this single chapter to the Son of Man as to the dry bones themselves, beginning with the hand of the Lord was upon me and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones and caused me to pass by them round about and behold there were very many in the open valley and lo they were very dry and he said unto me, Son of Man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. How's that for an entree, an introduction into a remarkable theme? Well, unless the Son of Man is brought down and out and into the Jewish dilemma, the Jewish perplexity, the Jewish condition, there's no fulfillment, there's no further use of this chapter, there's no raising these bones from the grave. It begins with the Son of Man.

Israel is inert. Israel is in the place of death. Israel is incapable of acting in its own behalf for its own restoration, its own survival.

That's why they're dead, because that is the consequence of living unto ourselves and for ourselves and out of our own Jewish intelligence and ability and humanity. The end thereof is death. There's a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof is death.

The way of man is death and we Jews are the epitome of man. And so why does God allow us to have a 50-year history in Israel and take a malarial wasteland and convert it to a modern civilization and resuscitate a virtually dead liturgical language and become the hi-fi electronic wizards of the world with Entebbe hit squads, and I've just been at the Entebbe airport, and things like that, that seem for a moment to capture the fancy and the imagination of the world and especially the church, rooting them on that they might succeed in their endeavor on the basis of some kind of supreme Jewish ability. Come on, you guys, confess up.

You like that. You hanker after that. You would have loved to have celebrated their success in exhibiting the kind of human ability that you pant after yourself and would love to duplicate.

That's why they must fail, because they're presented for you the wrong model. Instead of your confidence being in God, your eyes are upon flesh and wanting so much to see flesh succeed. And I know it's admirable and it's impressive, but our destiny as a people is not to impress, but to bless all the families of the earth.

Don't you know? And you do err, because you have not understood that destiny and the issue of God's glory through such a people raised from the dead and given a new character and life to make him known to all nations. Do you think that blessing can be conferred while we're yet on this side of the grave? Or is blessing necessarily, ever and always, a resurrection phenomenon like tonight? If this is a man speaking from the wrong side of the grave, speaking to you out of his UCLA, Berkeley, what shall I say, qualifications or human eloquence or intelligence, you'll be impressed, but you'll not be blessed. You'll only be blessed if what issues out of this vessel is from the other side of the grave, the resurrection side, the

newness of life that brings with it a power that turns word into event and penetrates our deeps, even when our minds can't grasp what is being said.

So I can understand the reluctance of the Son of Man to come down and out. It was so much nicer where he was, charismatically speaking, so much more familiar and enjoyable, and ain't we got fun, and we have all of this scintillating aspects of apostolic reality without having to suffer the cross, but such a one has to come out and down and into. And as I'm sitting here for the first time tonight, and this is how God does with prophetic men, and hearing the choruses, the thought came to me that the Son of Man of necessity has to follow the paradigm established by the Lord himself who came out and down and into, and that every salvific event has to follow that sequence of events, coming out and down and into a grim place.

The Lord came into the world, the Son of God, the impeccable, holy companion of the Father whose celestial glory we can't even imagine had to come out, not by constraint, but by willingness, and down and into the fray, the muck, the thick sludge, the vile condition of his own nation, which is epigrammatic of all men everywhere, and suffer their abuse at their hands, and their railings and their curses, and his eyes were too holy to look upon sin, and yet he had to be in the thick of it. And his first act in his coming forth in the fulfillment of his call was to enter the waters of baptism. Rightly did John the Baptist say, I have need to be baptized of you.

What are you doing? Your righteousness itself, I have need to fulfill all righteousness. I've got to begin an identification with the condition of my people. I've got to enter the waters of repentance with them.

Though I have no need, being impeccable, I choose to begin my messianic life by my identification with my people in their iniquity. And the father was so blessed by that, that as he came up out of the waters, the heavens opened and the dove came down and the voice of the father, this is my beloved son, in whom I'm well pleased. Because what he is demonstrating at this identification with his people in their sin, is what I am as God.

I'm a God who's not a passive observer. I'm in and with my people in their suffering and in their iniquity. And only in that place can I be the agent of their salvation.

Okay, you can go home now. That's enough. You got that much? You got plenty.

And if that's true of the Son of God, what shall we say? Can we be Israel's salvific agent without coming out, down and into their predicament, their condition, their dry bones? And not only distinctly at the periphery, but he moved him around and in it. He rubbed his prophetic face into the grit of Israel's death. Because we don't want to see those things.

We're escapists. We want to see the more pleasant side. We're positive thinkers.

We have no disposition for tragedy. We don't see the tragedy of life. I woke up one morning.

I don't know what the Lord was saying to me in my morning devotional time. And I came to the prayer meeting and I turned to one of the brothers. I said, life is tragic.

I'm impressed with the tragedy of human life. It's failure. It's stumbling.

It's misspent living. It's a caricature of God's intention. So it behooves the church to have a capacity for tragedy and to sense the tragic dimensions of life lived outside of God.

That we should know something of the pathos. Boy, am I laying it on you tonight. What a choice word.

When I said it, did the juice begin to flow in your mouth? Then you're a true saint. We don't have sufficient pathos, identification, sympathy, which is more than just nostalgia and sentimentality. It's the deep gut identification of people as God has it with his own creation.

And that's why the set time to favor Zion comes when? When his servants have a pathos for Israel, not when she's flying high because it's always easy to identify with Jews when they're cute, but when they are in judgment rightly for their sin and their cities have been devastated and their towers and all of the appurtenances of their impressive Israeli civilization is stubble and dust. And all the world gloats. These anti-Semites will gloat.

And when those missiles came over in the first Iraqi war, into Tel Aviv, how many, 39 or 40 struck Tel Aviv? The Palestinians were on their rooftops applauding. And when the two trade towers came down, there was worldwide Islamic celebration. And that will be a picture not just of Islam, but the world that is in agreement with it.

There's only one people who will not be gloating and rubbing their hands in glee at Israel's predicament and suffering. It will be the strange people called his servants who love Israel, not because they're lovable, because they will not be lovable at that time. They will be guilty of a lot of the things for which they're being identified.

Their violence, their torture, they're acting like all nations in the necessity of their own preservation. We don't have to make up fiction in order to support them. We need to realistically acknowledge that it's a sinful nation, and they're acting like men everywhere without God, which compels and requires of them violence and unrighteousness.

That they have to see this, that the final outworking of their own attempt to establish their own state must necessarily be a moral failure, because only God can establish the enduring blessing that he intends for Israel to be. So when you read the end of Amos chapter 9, I will plant them in the land, and they will not again be plucked up. I will plant them, that beautiful beatific metaphor of peaceful planting by the Lord, not men in their Zionist Jacob-clutching, usurping wit to establish and to move those Palestinians out of the way.

I will plant you in the land, and you'll have all eternity, all millennia, to compare the consequence of your own attempt to establish yourself in your unaided humanity, and the failure, the tragic failure, the moral failure, of a people who think themselves to be ethically superior. That's why we've got to fail, don't you understand? And then the comparison in what he has established in righteousness, and that Jerusalem will be called the city of righteousness, God our righteousness, by a people who are so self-righteous now, that they don't even know what the word sin means, and are insulted, as my Jewish colleague was in Oakland when I went to see her a couple of days ago, my former teaching colleague, that I should suggest that there's such a thing as human depravity, and that we share in Adam's fall, and share the Adamic nature, until we receive the benefit of a second Adam. You guys need to have more contact with Jews, or you don't know what opposition to the gospel means.

As I shared with Pete's dad today, a Jewish believing theologian says, nothing more reveals the radical content of the gospel, than the confrontation with the Jew over it. That's why God says to the Jew first, that you better know that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, against everything that seems to

mitigate against succeeding. Jewish stubbornness, the history, the foul history of the church toward the Jew, forced conversions, every card is stacked against God, in trying to promulgate the message of the gospel to Jews, who have been inured against it by history itself.

And what shall we say about our contemporary televangelists, and their scandals, and the money making, and the hype, and all the kinds of stuff that would turn Jews off. In a moment, we continue to slobber over and to support. They have every reason to be Christ rejecting, and yet, if they do not call upon the name of the Lord, they suffer an eternal loss.

Okay. So if the Son of Man had to come down and out, what about you guys? Excuse my Brooklyn expression. This is where it begins.

This is the paradigm. The Lord himself had to come down and out and into. And so long as we remain dainty, and at the sidelines, in the place of safety, we might receive even their applause and their admiration, that we're circumspect Christians who are not laying a number on them.

But if you get down into the grit of their lives, and get rubbed into it, and know the death that already stalks them, and try to speak to them out of that reality, you will be an offense. And so even having been brought down, and having his face rubbed into the grit, God, how shall I say it mischievously, says to the Son of Man, can these bones live? It's like a taunting question, as if to say, have you the faith to believe, looking upon this terrible calamity of dry bones, very dry. I'll tell you the kind of fool that I am.

When they used to speak this message, I had a bone with me, and I would take it out of my hoosie, and circulate it through the room, beginning with one end and down every row, until by the time it came back to me, it was almost all gone. It would come apart in the hands of the believers, as they passed it from person to person. The white chalky stuff would disintegrate.

And have you the faith that when bones are that dry, and that dead, that they can live? What are you saying, cats? I'm saying this. It's not enough to be charismatic. It's not enough to be evangelical.

In fact, in this case, it's not even enough to be prophetic, in the traditional sense of the word, because God has brought a man down and into a situation beyond his categories, beyond his faith, beyond his ability to believe. And that's where he must necessarily be brought, where we must necessarily be brought, or the word resurrection for us will only be an article of faith, an issue of our credo, and not the condition of our being. Whew! Where did that come from? Above.

We're phraseological Christians, and just the way they taught us in school, if we can mimic or verbalize a statement, we think we have its truth. Uh-uh. Resurrection is much more important than just a credo and a doctrine to which we subscribe.

It has got to be the authentic mode of our being and our life. And for that, you've got to be brought to places and conditions beyond your human Jewish ability to solve. That's where God is bringing Israel, and where he's got to bring the Son of Man company, which is the Church.

And we've not been this way here too far, and we don't even want to be. That's why you were restless the first night, if not irritated, because, after all, don't you deserve to have a systematic presentation that has a beginning, a middle, and an end, and makes sense? What is this guy rattling on with this buckshot that's confusing and bewildering, because we like things that are safe, secure, known, and in hand? He was even testing you and your patience and ability to bear something different and out of the way that rattles

your cage a little bit. Son of Man, can these bones live? What does the Son of Man say? Sure, I can handle this.

He's saying, Lord, thou knowest. He couldn't even bring himself to say yes, no, or maybe. Thou knowest.

You brought me to a place beyond my categories, beyond even my prophetic faith. And that's where you must necessarily be brought if you're to be the instrument of Israel's salvation. You're not going to do it by being a nice guy and having well-meaning intentions and saying the right thing.

There's another text I could have used tonight. Isaiah 35, which you need to read at your own leisure, that describes how the wilderness is glad for them, that untutored nature more recognizes the significance of Jews in flight through its territory than the church. It's glad for them because when it sees Jews in flight, it knows that the end is near.

And the bondage into which creation has been brought will soon be ended with their restoration. And so the trees leap, they clap their hands, Sharon delights. But the people who are moving through the wilderness, their hands are limp, their knees are sagging.

These are not Jews who are accustomed to rigorous wilderness conditions in which there's no light at the end of the tunnel. I've been in that wilderness in Mexico in a four-wheel vehicle and despaired would I get out alive. How will they despair? Soft Jews thrust into that same wilderness and being knocked about in the blazing sun and heat and no moisture and all the kinds of things for which they have no preparation.

It comes upon them suddenly, and they're ready to despair unto death because despair and lack of hope is more destructive of human life than the lack of moisture and food. Hope, they're without hope. That's what they say in this chapter.

We are dry bones, we are without hope. And so the Lord says to someone in the text who's evidently not Israel itself but another, say to them, your God will come. You say to them whose hands are slack and knees are collapsing and are without hope, your God will come.

And when they hear that, the blind see and the lame leap and water breaks forth out of the dry ground. That's you in your prophetic presence in the wilderness of the nations commanded to speak, not just a seemingly encouragement, a little pat on the back, but a prophetic word that is a creative event that when one hears it, however deep in despair, hope is born. Your God will come.

Because you're not making a hopeful statement, you're speaking out of the authenticity of your own experience of the God who had come to you in your wilderness. And if you have not had a wilderness for which you've passed, where you would have perished except that He had come, you'll have nothing to say to them. How would you like me to give an invitation right now to those who palpitate for Israel and love the Jews, to say, Lord, you have spared me until now, but if I must pass through a wilderness of a kind that you know how to affect, even in the midst of my middle-class circumstances behind closed shades that no one sees, where I will cry out with the same desperation and be faint and ready to perish except you appear, that I might be able to speak to them credibly with the authenticity that comes out of having become exiled and to have received your succor at a last desperate moment, I'm willing.

That's why our community was put into death, don't you know? After 10 years in northern Minnesota, after toughing it out in poverty conditions, heart-breaking, and finally beginning to see daylight, just when we're succeeding, just like Israel, just when Israel's seeming to succeed, the Lord brings the interfather. Just

when we're succeeding, He commands us to cease and bring everything into death and to abdicate and forfeit the property, the ministry, the marriage, the calling, everything, because death is death, saints, and it's total, and it's not a little fingering of this and that. It's a totality.

It's not death at all. Out. And the one brother who refused to receive my prophetic interpretation of God's requirement and had now moved into my house, always wanted to live in the woods, the Lord said, if you'll not leave, I'll kill you.

He left. And for three years that property was open to the elements and to the vandals. And it could have been 13 years or 30 years, because the Lord didn't say how long.

Because if He did, He would have removed some aspect of the death. Part of the aspect of the death is not only your removal, but the uncertainty of any return. Listen.

That's what prophets have to go through. That when they will speak to their people, your God will come. No, because He has come for them, in their darkness, in their wilderness, in their extremity, in their death.

Or else we have nothing to say that will raise the dead. Resurrection is not a category. It's a dimension of experience known only through death.

And maybe the greatest deception that assails the church today is our willingness to condescend to agreement with the doctrine, but keep the experience at arm's length. At this rate, will we ever get through this message? Okay. So He said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.

Thus says the Lord God unto these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord. Take note of the frequency of that statement, and you shall know that I am the Lord.

Because we have to say, with all rectitude, Israel does not presently know that I am, is the Lord. And unless they know, really know that I am, is the Lord, how shall they bless all the families of the earth? And to know that I am, is the Lord, is not a little piece of cheap theological understanding or Talmudic wisdom. It's the reality of the I am, who is the Lord, who raises the dead.

And you shall know that I am, is the Lord. And you'll know it expensively, but you'll know it well. Or you'll not be able to bless anyone.

Because I have said that you are to be a nation of priests and a light unto the world. So go eat your heart out. I know you wanted to make it on Wall Street, and you wanted to make Israel and Tel Aviv the Hong Kong of the Middle East, but I have a greater destiny for you.

The destiny with which I called you at the first, that must be fulfilled, I am not God. And that is a nation of priests and a light unto the world. And you shall know, really know, though it will be expensive for you.

So I prophesied as I was commanded. That seems like a glib little unctuous statement, so I prophesied as I commanded. Obedience is the name of the game.

And you've seen it demonstrated before you in three nights. With every prospect of failure, humiliation, first time in the area in many years, willing to run that risk in the hope of the greater glory of God,

transcending human limitation and safe messages that would have won your affection and esteem to bring the word in season, the word intended, the designated and appointed word. So to prophesy as I have commanded is no small thing, particularly to Americans who don't like to be commanded.

We are independent, self-willed, and we'll think about that maybe. I don't know. It depends on the condition.

I can't tell you. I can spit my guts out over my experience in community. As, for example, ending the year in a three-day fast and commencing the new year by the breaking of the fast at midnight with communion, because we know that every year the portent is so great.

What is it? Is it that sacrificial to fast for three days, the old year out and the new year in, in the year in which God is going to call you to New York City to penetrate the Jewish community there, which is the bastion of world Jewry? Is it too much? And so I thought I had the assent of the community, only to find out that certain people did not show up at the prayer times, where instead of a meal time was a prayer time. And to find out, one of the leading brothers had to ask the Lord. It wasn't enough that art had set the example or that was part of our history and procedure, but the Lord did not tell me.

So I'm free to eat. Not only was he free to eat, but to carry on the deceit as if he had been fasting. For simple obedience.

God has not said to me, well isn't it enough that he has said it through the founder, the leader, the elder, the one for whom you've come to this community and with whom you're identified? You can believe him for other things until it comes to your self-denial? Then you have to ask God for verification and confirmation? Rather err on the side of believing that it's God, then you should assert an independence that contradicts what God was wanting in the obedience of the people called to ultimate last days things. We're more independent than you know. And you know what the remarkable thing is? This Son of Man is not a single person.

This is a corporate entity. The Son of Man is the corporate Son of Man. It's the church in agreement being commanded and acting in the moment of God's choosing.

And I can tell you this from my experience. You're not going to be in the mood when it's required. I didn't want to go to Africa, from which I've just returned.

Praise God. There's treasure now up in heaven that I hath not seen the earth not heard. Mansions prepared because of that obedience in going.

But I pleaded with the African brother, are you sure? I was hoping he would say he's not sure and that we could cancel it and I don't need to run to Africa with two days of travel there, two days of travel back, and nine-hour flights to London, nine-hour flights to Kenya, to Entebbe, with four, five, six hours of layovers and all of that to speak into a sea of black faces who have not even gotten through elementary school. I can tell you that when the time of obedience comes, you'll not be in the mood and you'll have every reason to defer and not to do it. So what it says, and so he prophesied, as the Lord commanded, is no small thing.

It's a death as a matter of fact to be obedient to the Lord in the moment of his choosing and to do it corporately with all of the varieties of opinions that we have and maybes and I don't know. For God to bring a people like that to a single obedience in a moment of his choosing, while that people remains in death, is the great issue, not the issue of Israel, but the issue of the Church. Israel is out of the question.

They're inert. They cannot do anything for themselves. It has to come for them from outside of them by a people who have come to a place of prophetic obedience by which their American independence and self-will has been crucified.

And it won't happen in that moment. It's got to happen before it. So I prophesied as I was commanded.

There was a noise, a shaking, bones came together bone to bone. I beheld the sinners, the flesh came upon them, the skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. Then he said unto me, Prophecy unto the breath.

Prophecy, son of man. You know the way the Lord listened to him? Son of man, you sweaty, defecating, urinating piece of flesh that has to have a little plastic bottle by your bed because at the age of 75 and after the removal of your gallbladder, you can't even make it to the toilet without tripping over yourself. So you need the humiliation of a plastic convenience.

And now, though you have prophesied to the flesh and to the bones, can you prophesy to the breath? Because we know who the Ruach is. And what God is saying to the prophet, okay, it's one thing for you to speak to flesh and bones, but now address me. Command me to bring breath into those bones.

Oh Lord, I've been obedient up until now. I've done what you've asked. I can prophesy to bones, but who am I, a Brooklyn-born, a Sacramento-born, California-born, UCLA, Chico State, that I should say and speak to God and address and command him to breathe? Lord, I've got to draw the line.

This offends my spiritual sensibility. And maintaining my spirituality is more important than my obedience. Whew! You dear saints, you dear saints, you don't know what death is.

The flesh is only kids' stuff. It's the spirituality is where the rubber hits the road. You'll give up everything, but when it comes to that, that's your identity.

That's your distinction. That's what you have labored to attain. And God says, you've got to die to that.

You clutch that and make that the obstruction to my will? Israel remains in her grave. And the last thing that's got to go is this hyper-spirituality that is more important to you in your self-esteem and identification than obedience to me. Command the breath.

This is a remarkable chapter, huh? How come you didn't see those things? Because it takes the prophetic man to rightly interpret the prophetic text. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet an exceeding great army. Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel.

Behold, they say, our bones are dried, and our hope is lost. We are cut off for our parts. Therefore, prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, O my people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves and bring you into the land of Israel, and you shall know that I am the Lord when I have opened your graves.

Well, you don't have to be an exegete. You don't have to be a scholar to recognize that after coming out of the graves by virtue of the prophecy, then I will bring you into your land. So evidently, this is something that happens outside the land and precedes the return to the land as the redeemed of the Lord who returned to Zion.

But it takes place in the nations. They're going to perish in the nations. They're going to be persecuted and hounded in the nations.

I will shift you through all nations. And that's why I say to those who want to encourage Jews to migrate to Israel, I say, No. That's bringing them from the frying pan to the fire.

Israel will be an inferno, a blaze of remarkable devastation. The nation will be a wilderness of devastation. How does it say it in Isaiah? It escapes me.

Something like the land has become a desolation. Better to find and prepare a place of safety and refuge and flight in the nations. A greater prospect for survival in the nations than in the land.

But in the nations will be where the great transaction takes place of life and death for Jews. And therefore the church in the nations will be the son of man that will be the provision of God to those who acknowledge and say we are without hope. Our hope is lost.

Our bones are dried. We are cut off for our parts. Do you know what, dear saints? God is yet waiting for this statement from Israel, from Jewry.

It has never been made, to my knowledge. And when you go to the great concentration camps today, from Dachau to Auschwitz, in six foot high letters, and in some cases, as in Treblinka in Poland, in several languages, Yiddish, English, German, French, Hebrew, are the words, never again. Our statement after the recent catastrophe is never again.

Talk about chutzpah, talk about human presumption. Well, you guys had a shot at us while we were ghetto Jews and stroking our Talmudic beards. But now, we are one of the principal forces in the world.

We are with number one Air Force nuclear capability. Never again. Well, any believer knows that you never say to God, never again.

He's waiting for acknowledgement, which is so critical, not only for Jews, but for the world, because the world shares Jewish presumption. The world shares Jewish arrogance, conceit of man, that we somehow can determine our own destiny. We can establish our own nation states.

We can defend ourselves. We, I, my. God is waiting.

And then when he hears it, then he says, therefore prophesy. This text is reiterating what we've already described. It's not just a chronological this then that.

It's going back again. When does the Son of God, Son of Man, command the Son of Man to prophesy? The therefore that follows, when they shall themselves say, we are without hope. We are cut off.

We are as dry bones. That acknowledgement has not yet ever come from the nation Israel or world Jewry in its history, especially its modern history. And therefore, whatever it will take to obtain that acknowledgement God will bring, or there'll be no resurrection from the grave.

There's a therefore for which he waits. So it waits upon the Jewish acknowledgement of the inert helplessness, their inability to save themselves, to establish their nationhood, to be the people called of God. And it waits also on the Son of Obedience, Corporate Son, who can be commanded, even to the point of that which offends his own sensibility of commanding God's breath to breathe into those bones.

And you shall know that I am the Lord when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves and shall put my spirit in you and you shall live and shall place you in your own land. Notice. I shall place you.

I will plant you. It is very different than what we have seen since 1948 where men by their own prowess, their own Jewish Zionist ability and finance and political persuasion have established themselves only to fail. I will plant you.

I will bring you. I will restore you. I will redeem you.

Then you shall know that I the Lord have spoken it and performed it, saith the Lord. If there's any point in this text where we might wrinkle our eyebrows, I the Lord have spoken and performed it. Lord, up till now, everything has been done through the Son of Man.

He spoke. He performed. He was obedient.

His prophecy raised those bones and brought flesh and sinew and breath. How do you say now that I the Lord have spoken it? Because you're dumb dumb? If he has spoken it, I have spoken it because I have brought the Son of Man to a place beyond what he understood prophetically, evangelically, and charismatically, which is to say you cannot tell where the Son of Man ends and I begin. His thought is my thought.

His speech is my speech. His heart is my heart. His authority is my authority.

We have come into a place of union through that death through his spirituality and distinctiveness that he enjoyed while he was up and out. But now he and I are one when he speaks, I speak. His authority is my authority.

You can't tell where he ends and I begin. He's a bride adorned for the bridegroom. He's come to the place of union with his God.

And only the crisis of Israel will have brought him there. Until that crisis came, he would have been content to remain up and out and have enjoyed the charismatic life and being applauded as prophet. But it was the crisis of Israel and the wisdom of God that brought him down and out and into a condition beyond his own faith, beyond his own love, beyond his own ability, where if God is not God and your life in God, everything fails.

That's the place to which we are being bitten, you dear saints. And we can't save Israel from any place outside of it. That's the mystery.

That's why Paul said, All the depth of the rich is both of the wisdom and knowledge of God who has been his counselor. For of him and through him and to him are all things to whom be glory forever. What is Paul waxing ecstatic about? He's not a man just to trip over himself with ecstasies of doxology for no reason.

He has seen something apostolically. What he has seen is not only Israel's restoration in the last days, out of death, but that the agent of that restoration is none other but the church itself and the church transfigured by the very requirement to be to Israel what it alone must. And nothing less nor other will bring the church to that place of obedience and that union with God but the crisis of Israel itself.

Even in her unbelief, even in her apostasy, even in her fallenness, especially in that condition is the crisis that compels us to become the church because it's not enough even by faith that God has given to prophesy to those bones because faith without love cannot work. And if you're going to come with your slobbery sentimental disposition toward Israel and the Jew, those words however inspired of God and full of faith will fail. It must work by love, but not slobbery sentiment.

And that's the thing that's got to die. You've got to die to your present affinity for Israel and the Jews because they're cute and because you have romantic notions birthed by your suppositions from your Old Testament text that thinks that all Jews today are like David. You need to go there and have your bottom pinched by these lecherous men to know the truth of their condition and to love them in that truth.

So not only do we need the faith of God and the obedience of the Son of God and the unity that only He can affect that we might be one voice, but we need the love of God that transcends our shabby human and sentimental affinity for Jews which will go up with a puff in the moment that they disappoint us. And the impediment that stops the flow of that love is our unwillingness to let go of the measure of identification we presently have. I can tell you, speaking the world over, my toughest audience are Christian Zionists.

They shoot daggers at me with their eyes. If they could skin me alive, they would. The anger at what is being put before them, the proposal, because their identification with Israel at the level that they enjoy is caught up in a total condition that is cross-avoiding and charismatic-affirming and it's a whole Weltanschauung, if anybody knows German, it's a whole cosmic view, it's a whole mentality, it's a whole disposition.

But when it's challenged, it's not just the issue of Israel that is challenged, it's the issue of reality, it's the issue of the cross, it's the issue of God in a depth beyond their own desire and intention. Though they may not recognize that with their minds, inside they shudder and react with vehemence and anger because you're threatening the whole false foundation of their pseudo-Christian life that reflects Israel at a sentimental level and wants to see it so much to succeed because they want so much to succeed. And do not understand that the issue, both for Israel and the Church, is not success, but glory to God forever.

Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. Do you see what he's after? And see how we cannot obtain it independent of them? How it's the crisis of Israel that compels us and brings us to this ultimate ground? And so what is Zion? Zion was that ultimate fortress of a Jebusite kind that would not yield to David. It is the stubborn final statement of all that is antithetical to God that defied David to take it and felt itself impregnable.

But David would not condescend to that kind of intimidation, fear, and threat. So the very stronghold of the demonic powers of darkness was conquered and taken at great cost and became the citadel of David and the city of David and the Zion upon which he was enthroned. Zion is at first the ultimate opposition to the purposes of God.

And its taking and its victory is the triumph that glorifies God forever. And in the thing that we have looked at tonight, I'm concluding now in summary, the taking of the stronghold meant the overcoming of fear, the overcoming of fantasy, the overcoming of falsity. That's just an alliteration on the letter F. But what am I saying? That God did with the Son of Man in bringing him down and out and into.

He had to deal with fear to leave the place that is secure and known and familiar. That power had to be broken when the hand of God came upon him, the Spirit of God that brought him down. He had to deal

with fantasy of supposed spirituality and whatever he enjoyed in that place in the religious realm where he wanted to remain.

It had to deal with falsity of spirituality that so supposedly honors God that who am I to command breath to come into him? Can you understand? That in the dealing with the Son of Man, every Jebusite stronghold was broken. So that the last stronghold is defeated in the obedience to God in the very same conduct and action by which Israel itself is saved out of death. You'll have to hear this again.

The same conduct and action by which Israel is saved is the same thing that breaks the final Jebusite stronghold upon the church and frees it from fear, fantasy, and false spirituality so that God has a restored nation and a transfigured church in the same action by which Israel is raised from the dead. That's why Paul was beside himself in such doxology as English language cannot capture. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

Zion is obtained in the very moment and in the same action as Israel's deliverance. This is the capstone for yesterday's message. Zion is obtained, the final triumph of God.

The final, permanent, enduring victory of Zion over the Jebusite opposition is obtained in the same conduct and action by which Israel is raised from the dead. The church is transfigured. God is glorified by a church where you cannot say where it ends and he begins.

They are one in union, but it has come at a cost of death to every individualistic and religious impulse that has kept the Son of Man up and above and out from the reality of Israel itself. Israel had to be in that crisis condition in order to bring the church into the place by which the last Jebusite hold upon the church. Fear, fantasy, false spirituality is broken in bringing the Son of Man to be able to command even the Spirit of God to enter those bones and that flesh.

I've never seen it before. I've never said it before. This is the first time, as often as I have spoken from this text, it's the first time that the Lord has shown me the conjunction between the deliverer coming out of Zion and Israel's restoration and the effect upon Zion itself in coming to the ultimate place of faith in the knowledge of God, in obedience, and in the love of God which is greater than other than human sentimentality, which is the most painful thing and finally to give up because we fear if we lose it, we lose our identity.

The ironic thing is that in the losing of it, we gain it. That the unconditional love of God alone by which the faith works that raises them from the dead is the givingness of God which we oppose by our unwillingness to yield that measure of affection and sentimentality that we have so long held and which we enjoy holding. There's got to be a no man's land in which we let go of the shallow and the sentimental and the humanly contrived, the false thing, the false spirituality, and before we come into the land of the resurrection side, the reality, the Lord will test us and everything in us will itch to return to what we once knew and what was once familiar.

How many times have I been taunted and mocked about my marriage? Come on, can't you buy your wife flowers and a box of candy and get with it and keep the program? You're supposed to be a man in leadership and look at the condition of your marriage. Why don't you do this, this, and this? Why are you waiting for that love of God that is beyond your human affection, that loves the unlovable, the Gentile of the Gentiles who doesn't understand your calling and for whom you are an offense and all those kinds of things that cannot be humanly arbitrated or performed but have to wait on God for the thing that only he

himself can perform if you let go the shabby counterfeit by which you had hoped to affect the kind of reconciliation that would impress the body of Christ. Got the idea? There's a death, saints, and we've got to be willing to the death of that which is partial, humanly contrived, shallow, and yet applauded by others.

But it's not the authentic thing that will raise Israel from its grave. Only he can and he will when we will get out of the way and suffer the deaths by the obedience to which we're brought together. Being commanded to speak with one voice in the moment of the Lord's choosing and saying the same thing not because we have become mechanical cutouts but because we have been dealt with in the severity of God in that one place where he works the depths of his sanctifying work, the Church, that when he calls for it it can be given and given as one voice corporately and only that will raise Israel from her grave.

Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God who has been his counselor. Israel's restoration is the establishment of Zion and the establishment of Zion is the restoration of Israel and the glory of God forever. You know what made Paul an apostle and will make you an apostolic church? Is that there is a motive and an issue beyond either the Church or Israel as great as these entities are and their redemption and their transfiguration is capital.

There's yet a greater consideration that eclipses both and that is the glory of God forever.

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