

Praying the Peace of Jerusalem - Part 1

by Art Katz

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing and honoring God's choice of Jerusalem as the center of His theocratic rule over the nations, and encourages listeners to pray for the peace of Jerusalem and to overcome their resistance to God's choice.

Duration: 58:22

Scripture: Genesis 11:4-9, Genesis 12:1-3, Matthew 6:33, Revelation 21:2

Topics: "Peace of Jerusalem"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of the church understanding its role in the redemptive drama of God. He compares the church to the house of God and encourages believers to have a mindset and attitude of heart that surpasses what is known in the New Testament. The speaker also references the Psalms and highlights the need for the church to have a definitive faith like that of Israel. He mentions the wilderness experience of Israel and how it represents a lack of hope and familiarity, urging believers to seek God in times of desolation.

Transcript

In most Bibles, there will be a little italicized statement before the text where there's a summary of the meaning of the text. In my New King James, it says, the joy of going to the house of the Lord. Anybody else have another inscription over there? A song of degrees.

A song of degrees. A song of ascents. A song of ascents.

Ascent. There are a number of songs of ascent. That means the actual going up.

I guess everybody knows. There were three times in the year when Hebrew men were required to go up to Jerusalem. Keep free of the solemn feast days.

And Jerusalem is a going up, if you've never been there. Even by bus, the spiraling thing that brings you up. So I was glad when they said to me, let us go into the house of the Lord.

Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together, where the tribes go up. The tribes of the Lord, to the testimony of Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord.

For thrones are set there for judgment. The thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls. Prosperity within your palaces.

For the sake of my brethren and companions, I will now say, peace be within you. Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek no good. So, this is a psalm of pilgrimage.

Literally, of pilgrim saints going up. But I think that it wouldn't hurt us to consider that that's a description of our life and called also. Are you aware of that? Hebrew speaks about being strangers, pilgrims, and there's another phrase in the earth.

Sojourners in the earth. I think there are very few saints who look upon themselves as pilgrims. It's a word that is almost archaic, antiquated.

But we have so settled down and into our respective cultures that we don't see ourselves as a people in movement toward something. There's a goal. A pilgrim has a goal and he will not rest until he has attained it.

Whatever the hardship of going up, and up is always contrary to gravity. There's a tug always that seeks to hold down or to repress or to keep from going up. So, may the Lord restore and give us the mindset of a pilgrim that is appropriate to the faith.

Lest we stay down or stay settled in our leaves and not realize that we're in a movement toward something. What that something is, maybe the psalm itself will help to clarify. But just get the word pilgrim in your spirit.

We're pilgrims, strangers, and sojourners in the earth. We're not fixed. We're moving toward something spiritually and actually.

And it would not hurt to say that it could be summed up in one word, Jerusalem. Both as an actual, physical, literal city and center, but also as a symbol and a statement of what is in God's ultimate intention. So, no wonder that the psalmist says, I was glad when they said to me, let's go up.

Notice, they said to me, so it's more than one who's making the suggestion. And in fact, going up, probably, and any pilgrimage, though there's great emphasis upon us, individually, has to be seen also as something that's corporate. They said to me, it's the people of God that go up.

We're making it with the company of God's people, the saints of God, the sadokim, the righteous ones. Not that they are perfect, they are imperfect. But God intends that we should become blameless and he sees us as the righteous of the world.

Because there's only one other alternative to that, and that's the wicked. The righteous and the wicked are the two polarities that are continually referred to in the psalms, and they are in contention. The wicked have as their object the persecution and the oppression of the righteous.

The righteous are crying out to God continually in the psalms for the persecution and the opposition that comes to them from the wicked. I don't know that I have yet found an adequate definition for wicked, but I think we'll see as we go on in the psalms. It's a suggestion of those who ought to know better, who maybe even purport to be among the people of God, but have turned from the faith, betray it, and their especial

hostility is to those who seek to be faithful and want to go up to Jerusalem.

So, let us go into the house of the Lord. I put the word, I don't know if you have the word into in your text. It's more than let us go to.

Let us go into. What about the house of the Lord? Are we talking about a building, a structure? What is the house of the Lord that you can go into? And not just come to. There's an entry into something.

I'm asking, feel free to conjecture and think. The house of the Lord is what you call a pregnant phrase. First of all, because He inhabits it.

And the house of the Lord can be the sanctuary, the dwelling, the temple, or, and as well, the whole corporate thing that is made up by the body of Christ. It's something to come into, not just merely to approach. It's one thing to be respectful and to stand outside and admire a building.

It's another thing to enter. It's another thing to be made part of. Is not the house of the Lord also heaven? I'm sorry? Is not the house of the Lord also heaven? Is that not the ultimate house for one? Wherever the Lord is, heaven is.

Okay. So heaven is not a geographical location. It's where God is.

And His sanctuary and dwelling place is heavenly. The house of the Lord is a heavenly place. And out of it radiates the light of God and the law of the Lord and the word of the Lord to the nations.

This is the locus. This is the eternal center. And we need to have a sense of this.

The world is not just a bunch of discordant things thrown out there. There's a God who has structured it and He has a center. We've got to find the eternal center, the quintessence, the heart of the heart of the matter is the house of the Lord.

His designated dwelling place and presence and in the place where He Himself has designated and chosen, namely the city of Jerusalem in the land of Israel and within the city of Jerusalem the holy hill of Zion. So if you've not read Psalm 2 that is one of the great celebrations where He says He holds the nations in derision. He holds them to scorn.

He laughs because they seek to break the fetters of God and loose themselves from the Lord and from His anointed one. But He holds them in derision for I have set my King on the holy hill of Zion. If ever you've been to Jerusalem and see the city of David which is Zion, it's not all that much to look at.

Not physically. And it's only a hill. I call it a pimple.

When you think of the great mountains that you would think appropriate for the locust of God's dwelling Mount Olympus the Greeks loved the large and the impressive and the outwardly external thing. God chooses the foolish the weak, the vain the cave where David had his inception the stable where Jesus had his inception and the hill, the holy hill of Zion, God's choice. But the nations rage against it.

They don't like specificity. This is the scandal of specificity is the God who chooses something explicit. Jerusalem Zion Israel Not the least of the offense of the Jew is that it shows God's chosenness that a lot of what constitutes the animosity against Jews or anti-Semitism is the fact that it has to do with a people whom God has chosen.

And in the democratic temper that characterizes our age, we don't like God to be that specific. Particularly when in being specific it omits us. Is that the idea? We like equality, we like all things the same male and female men and women, equal rights, equal this equal, equal, equal but God is hierarchical God has a divine order God has a crowning glory, God has a pinnacle, God has a centerpiece and it behooves us, the church, to be in agreement with what he has chosen Jerusalem and not merely to admire it from afar but to come up and into the house of the Lord.

Ironic to say that in one breath and to acknowledge in the other that if there's one place I dread going in the earth, it's Israel and Jerusalem. I need almost to be dragged by a team of horses. I cannot stand to be in the city of Jerusalem.

How do you explain that, Katz? Having said what you've said. Well, because it is not yet a dawn for the bridegroom. It's a city with grass growing up in the cracks of the street and the jerry-built houses and hotels and motels and flashing lights and neons and places of entertainment are totally incongruous and unbecoming and unfitting the house of the Lord.

But the day will come when that city will be rebuilt upon its ruins and one of the offenses that we bear now in the body of Christ, especially in Israel, is to say that this present city of Jerusalem will be reduced to rubble and must be in order to be raised up appropriately as the dwelling and the sanctuary of the Most High God that all nations shall come to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. Jerusalem will be the crowning city of God in the earth. So this psalm gives us a sense of anticipation and it can almost be read eschatologically as if it has already taken place and that the pilgrims are going up to the city that has been rebuilt and restored and in which now the sanctuary is actually occupied by the presence of the Living God and that his word can go forth out of Jerusalem and the law of the Lord out of Zion.

So our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem. In a little commentary I looked at this morning the writers give the Hebrew another statement. You know, the Hebrew lends itself to varied expressions.

It's remarkable. I don't know if that's true for other languages, but there's something about the nature of the Hebrew language you could read it this way, but you could also read it that way. And both are true.

So this translation says our feet have been standing within your gates, but the translation of Kyle and Bailich one of whom was German, the other a Hebrew Christian German who has written a definitive commentary on the Old Testament in the late 19th century, their translation reads our feet stood still within your gates. Seeming to suggest that when the pilgrims after their long and arduous ascent up finally come into the gates of Jerusalem, they have to stop. There's not another step to be taken.

They are so awestruck by the beauty and the magnificence, the celestial glory that is to be found in that holy place that they don't take another step. You don't just come in and spit out your chewing gum and go like a tourist to look and gawk at this thing and that thing. You stand transfixed at the visible beauty of the great city of God.

Now if that's an allegory of the church as the house of God, may the day come when our feet stand still and look upon and contemplate the beauty of that house that is now in a pretty crummy condition but it will be a majestic habitation for the spirit of the living God. So what did we say about these days? We're seeking the definitive faith of Israel in the Psalms and we're going to see a mindset, a perception an attitude of heart, a disposition of spirit that so eclipses anything that we presently know as New Testament

saints. It's a remarkable paradox that we have to reach back into the biblical past to find a statement of faith that it would be appropriate for us as the church that concludes the age that our feet would stand still when we come within the age.

You see how out of keeping that is with our modern mindsets? Our feet would trample we would come rushing in we would look for the souvenir kiosk we would go to put our initials carved into some building when you come into the city of God your feet stand still when you come in within the gates you are awestruck at the remarkable beauty of the city of God.

Or I don't know the grammatical justification for the decision of the translators but some translations put this on a future chance it says our feet shall stand within thy gates O Jerusalem having an eschatological tinge about it so that this is something that they wouldn't just go and come from go to and retire again but it would be something permanent and lasting and enduring that at length and at last their feet would stand in Jerusalem a hope of a transfigured Jerusalem that would have the full character of the promise all the more if the pilgrimage to that Jerusalem was sacrificial along the way it had to do with struggle, with sacrifice with opposition with fighting the good fight of faith with being bloody but unbowed and all the kinds of humiliations and whatever it is that

constitutes pilgrimage and when you get there you're standing not only in respect for what you see but the price that has been extracted from the saints of God through time immemorial to finally come to that place that the city of God is the awesome phenomenon that it is so what shall we say this ought to kindle our spirits and to encourage us in the pilgrimage because we have a goal a pilgrimage is not an aimless wandering a pilgrimage is something set in a motion and a direction with a culmination and a goal and that goal is the city of God the tabernacle of God, the dwelling place of God and the locus of God's theocratic rule over the nations this is not just pretty poetry this is nuts and bolts governance, the government of God over creation because when this city is the glorious

thing that will bring awe to the pilgrims who stand there it will also at the same time be the locus of God's rule over creation his theocratic crown the law of the Lord shall go forth out of that Zion but not before not before it becomes a splendor and a glory so there's an incentive for our pilgrimage we're moving towards something it's not just a physical entity however beautiful that might be in itself, it's the conclusion, the consummation of God's whole redemptive drama, Paul spoke of that in these days that Genesis 1 from 11 is creation sin, the fall of man the rise of the nations, the building of the tower of Babel, the first statement of nations and defiance of God who want to get elevate themselves even into the heavens and then chapter 12 God's answer is with one man out of Ur

of the Chaldees, Abram and that begins God's whole redemptive program of bringing forth out of him a nation and through that nation the redemption of all mankind in the capital city of that nation the holy city of Jerusalem the city of peace so this is the end of the journey Genesis 12 is its beginning and we're caught up as pilgrims in the process so how much of the church has gone up follow the question how much of the church has gone up to Jerusalem how much of the church sees itself in pilgrimage how much of the church understands that there's a redemptive drama a great saga that is taking place of which the church is God's principle agency for its fulfillment in the last days as we will see on other occasions Israel itself will be down and out Israel will be as dry bones Israel will

be incapable of the fulfilling of its own destiny and goal it's the church in the earth and in the nations that is God's agency for Israel's own redemption and the restoration of its principle city and the holy hill of Zion

but how many in the church see that how many realize that they're embarked on something and in something together that we're in a pilgrimage and a journey toward an end if you don't see it really see it, it condemns your Christianity as I've said on many occasions to a mere succession of Sunday services probably one of the greatest anomalies of the world is a church that is bored Christians that are bored and yawn and come sluggishly to the house of God without any anticipation for one Sunday has become like the next because there's no direction there's no movement

there's no pilgrimage there's no conservation this is remarkably important that we are called to go up so I'm raising the question how many in the church have heard that call and maybe we who have heard it and are in motion need to say to others come up with us to the house of the Lord is it because the church is offended by Israel the church doesn't want to accept the fact that there is a responsibility as Paul demonstrates that they have to be a witness to the Jews it is no demonstration of jealousy it's not a demonstration of separation rather than unity they've not chosen what God has chosen and they don't like God's choice they would much rather it had been Berlin or Geneva or New York City or some other nation some other people but the Jew the outcast the blasphemer the apostate and

we're to go to that nation to that people to that city really searches us out and finds the deepest reservoirs of resistance to God as is expressed in our resistance to what he has chosen so to say to someone come up to a gentile come on up to Jerusalem is to put before them a very large thing and their unwillingness and the dragging of their feet is a remarkable statement not so much against the Jew as it is against God as the God who chooses Jerusalem and we need to recognize that this is the principle struggle I would say in the church today the unwillingness of the church to understand and to give itself to the centrality of Israel and the chosenness of God for Jerusalem and for Zion seeing itself in opposition wanting itself to be elevated and yet God says to that church pray for the

peace of Jerusalem that you might prosper get over your hang up and whatever it is that is deep in your gentile gut that prevents you from honoring whom God has chosen and for being conditional and critical and saying they don't deserve it as if we ever deserve it you know what I mean you see what that reveals maybe not least of God's objective in declaring his purpose that his purpose would be according to election is because it does peak something in man in fact if you look at the whole history of redemption from Abel to Esau and Jacob look at Joseph and his brethren always when there was a choice it would stir the Indian contempt and so God is doing something in that choice to prove the hearts of men and when they despise and protest his choice and his freedom of that choice they

exclude themselves it's not that his choice has excluded anyone it's that the failure to bow before God's prerogative to choose is a self exclusion that's what it turns out to be remember the phrase the scandal of specificity and note the temper of modern times to an ambiguity to a generalization God made the male and female but we make them unisex the men's hair now is longer than the woman's and the woman is shorter and is becoming masculine there's a blurring of the distinctiveness of what God has chosen and a kind of a bland universality that doesn't like that which is specific so there's much here at the heart of the rebellion of man against God and against his design that is nowhere revealed more acutely than in the resistance to the Jerusalem that God has chosen and to the people

Israel that underlies the whole conflict and struggle we need to search our own hearts to see what residue of resistance there might be with us and be a people who chooses what God has chosen and not the least of which is your own chosenness someone raised the question last night many called but few are chosen I almost felt like saying many who refuse to be chosen and you know that that's the condition of Israel today

they don't want to be chosen it has not brought them nachas and satisfaction it's brought them tsuras trouble and affliction they would rather be like every other nation they want to become the Hong Kong of the Middle East and a great commercial center where you can get your Gucci handbags and other stuff like that they don't want to be distinctive and chosen because there's

trouble there you know what I mean so even the chosen refuse to be chosen and maybe there's something like that in the church we'd rather be a bland I don't know what formless Christian we shrink from the distinctiveness of our call and the responsibility that goes with that acceptance and the glory that will follow I'm offensive to the what is specific is offensive particularly if it's God who has specifically chosen the romanticizing of Israel by the church the Christians have some kind of romantic love for Israel I've been there many times and seen the hordes of Christians that come through that worship the Jewish people and aren't they wonderful and haven't they done such wonderful things and you've got the Christian Zionists that being a Jewish believer is embarrassing because they

want to elevate you to a position which rightfully is not to be elevated to and there's this whole kind of theology that Israel is not going to be devastated the church refuses to see what God is going to do there's this other side too you can oppose God in your sentimentality of endorsing the right people for the wrong reasons some humanistic celebration of their hit squad ability rather than their theocratic calling so we'll talk about that some of your church is also hypocrite because they go through when they're in awe but when they see a Jew on the street they're not going to talk to him I mean you know what I'm trying to say is that not kind of being a hypocrite I'm always suspicious of this love for Israel and for the Jew there and the complete neglect of the Jews that are in their

own hometown why aren't they as excited for them as those that are walking God is saying something much more and other than that right in fact what I'm saying is the kind of peace that God is wanting shall not be accomplished without the first being tremendous devastation violence sacrifice and judgement for Jerusalem Jerusalem standing as the symbol of all Israel the real peace will not come until that violence first falls so to pray for the peace of Jerusalem in truth is to invite and to welcome God's last days dealings with Israel it's to welcome the apocalyptic violence of God's judgement upon the people and upon the land so that the true peace can really come can you follow that and us as well ok that was my next thought if you have a heart for that will you recognize that there's an

unavoidable violence a conflict a devastation uprooting a plucking up and a tearing down that precedes the building and the planting for Israel to what degree do we welcome that for our can we really pray for Jerusalem for that reality if we shun that reality for ourselves in our own life and ourselves as believers in the church how much of our present devastation in our marriages and our families is the shaking up of God who is not letting us get by with a cheap peace because we happen to be compatible or we're doing well financially or we have what shall I say established a kind of relationship that's more like a truce than it is a peace where you can get by where you can function where there's no squabbling and you can go on is not the kind of peace that glorifies God it will not

suffice for Israel and it will not suffice for us and for the church so to be a pilgrim and to pray for the peace of Jerusalem means not only to welcome God's devastation where devastation is required for them but also for our or our prayers will fall to the ground talk about hypocrisy they will be hollow unless we welcome for ourselves as the Israel of God the believing community the same thing that we're asking God for for the Israel of God that is national you see that the tandem thing when you understand that you can understand why Christians shrink from the idea that Israel shall have to face and the apocalyptic fury of

God that there will be a judgment and a destruction and a dispersal and an exile before there will be a return and a glory they would rather see present Israel

succeed progressively than be brought down into ruin and have to be raised up as resurrection and we have the same set of desires for ourselves we would rather see ourselves progressively improve than to welcome the devastations that cannot be avoided that God would raise us up not just as an improved people but as the people of the resurrection because it's only as that kind of church that our prayers could be effectual on Israel's behalf to pray for the peace of Jerusalem in a way that will bring the peace of Jerusalem has got to be itself resurrection prayer not just wishful thinking the wishful thinking is still at the level of humanism and I don't think such prayers even get beyond the ceiling but the kind of prayer that will actually affect the peace of Jerusalem will be God's own

prayers prayed in God's own power by a people who have welcomed his own devastations for themselves that they might be a people of the resurrection praying resurrection prayers and obtaining the answers that only that kind of prayer can bring.

If this is not making sense think on Ezekiel 37 and the valley of dry bones where Israel is reduced to such a condition that they themselves say we are cut off, we are without hope, we are as dry bones.

That is imperative for a people who are historically so self-sufficient so enabled in themselves and cannot fulfill their destiny on that basis. Remember the word that was in last night's speaking from Paul predestined a destiny that was established by God before Israel has a destiny but it cannot accomplish it on the basis of its own Jewish ability. To think so as Christians is to be romantic and to be deluded they can only fulfill it as a nation that has been raised from the dead to pray for the peace of Jerusalem is to pray for the death of present Israel.

But how is Israel raised from the dead not by the Lord himself directly but by the Son of Man who is commanded to speak to those bones that they might live and that speaking itself has got to be resurrection speaking words charged with resurrection power as if God himself had spoken it that it is creative in its speaking it actually raises the dead so to pray for Israel's resurrection from the dead is to pray for our own we're so connected our fate, our destiny with this people and that's why we prefer to keep it at the level of sentimentality of romanticism of shallow humanism of wanting the best of saying let's pray for the peace of Jerusalem let's take a moment to pray bring peace resolve their conflicts, remove Arafat the PLO harmonize this establish their security that is not only

unbecoming it actually is a setback for the church to pray prayers of that kind is not only to pray prayers that are invalid but it is to actually weaken the composition of the church itself it is to bring delusion into the church and to make us non-church by participating in a non-prayer because in our deepest heart we're unwilling for the true peace and the thing that must proceed when God says pray for the peace of Jerusalem it's not only Jerusalem that he's thinking about it's you who he's calling to pray by that invitation to pray he's calling you to an awareness and an acknowledgement and a call of a kind that you would not otherwise have seen and from which you would have shrunk God always has the two things in mind Israel and the church it's not Israel that's being addressed here

in pray for the peace of Jerusalem they are incapable of it they have no effectual relationship with God their prayers at best are mechanical liturgical humanistic he's addressing a believing people the pilgrim people of God namely the church you pray for the peace of Jerusalem because you're the key to their peace your failure to pray or your failure to pray truly leaves Israel in it's destitute condition your prayer is

the key to it's peace and it's peace is the key to the peace of all nations for when the law goes forth out of Zion nations will study war no more and turn their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks we're not talking about kids stuff this is not poetry this is a little compressed statement but when you unpack it and come into this house it contains

the genius of the whole redemptive drama of God of which the church is the principal agent but a church of what kind not a bunch of flim flam saints who just want to discharge a little responsibility and yes I pray for the peace of Jerusalem but a church that prays with cognizance with understanding prays together recognizing that there will be no peace before the necessary judgement that to pray for the peace is to pray for the judgement got the picture and to pray for their judgement is to pray for our judgement or it's not a prayer at all so does the church have a corporate death ahead of them? yes and I have never before said this at any time but now I'm hearing myself I'm being instructed out of my own mouth I'm seeing something with greater clarity than I have ever before seen it

the remarkable and inextricable union of the church with Israel which in fact we share that destiny we are the Israel of God so that our prayer is the key but if prayer becomes a trite exercise if it's a mere batting at the air if it's only a cathartic experience excuse my fancy language you know what that means? cathartic is when you engage in something for your own relief a kind of spiritual masturbation where your prayer is only to relieve you of a sense of duty or obligation and you can get rid of it I have prayed for the peace of Jerusalem when our prayer becomes that and it is that largely now not only is it ineffectual but it defaces the church itself can you understand that if we hear a word that is a non-word we're sitting in a church we're hearing a man preach and it's eloquent

or impressive or sounds nice it's biblical but it's not a true word it's not that we have just been robbed of something but we have been denuded we have suffered loss and if we continue in that we're going to become insensitive all the more if we say amen to it and are inducted into a religious format by which we nod in agreement and say amen to words that are non-words and prayers that are non-prayers we become religious dull, dense and inert we become non-church and totally incapable of being to Israel what we must prayer is the measure of the truth of what we are in God you want to take your index you want to know where you are in God how spiritual you are you want to know what the truth of your life is measure it by your prayer and most especially your public prayer of what are you

capable of then I'm very interested in our morning prayer times this is more than just getting our feet wet and setting the atmosphere for the day this is significant transaction with God and I don't know if you'll notice there are whole pockets of silence that are never broken and may not be for the entire school how is that there are certain things that are incapacitated we're incapable of praying aloud and publicly it's a statement of where we are in God and the reality and the truth of God in our lives measured nowhere more accurately than in the issue of prayer.

Prayer is the name of the game and I suppose you can say with that worship prayer, praise, worship are all statements of truth and measure of the reality of the relationship which we have or do not have with God. If prayer can become mechanical if prayer can become religious or just remain silent what do you think we will be capable of in praise and in worship equally.

Something is amiss and we're talking about not just an aspect of the Christian life but a critical center for if our prayers have become non-prayers, effete, ineffectual. A brother quoted this scripture today, it's the fervent prayer of righteous men and women that avails much.

I'm alive today and serving you because 35 years ago some roly-poly gentile woman in Oakland, California together with her teenage daughter were praying for a Jewish atheist and radical who was on his way to death but their prayer was effectual and fervent not because they were of an Italian descent or Latin but because they were righteous that is to say they would not tolerate a compromised religiosity they would not be content with feigned prayer they would not get through the moment of prayer as an exercise or the relief of conscience that I prayed for the peace of Jerusalem, now let's go on they were taking the faith seriously, they were fervent they were welcoming for themselves what they were praying for others something like Isaiah 35 when Israel is in the wilderness and they're downcast, they're nigh unto death not so much for physical exhaustion though that will certainly be true but for the lack of hope to be in a wilderness is desolation it's the loss of hope it's the lack of anything familiar where am I, how do I get here, where am I going I'm starving, I'm thirsty the heat is burning me up we're extending our lives, we're at the verge of death and where is God who has allowed this calamity to fall upon us and to uproot us from Hollywood and Pasadena and Moscow and the places that we have enjoyed and find ourselves in the wilderness I'm speaking literally this is going to take place for a remnant of Israel God is going to shift them in the wilderness, they'll be nigh unto death, not only from the physical demand of it but the absence of hope the disorientation the dread and then God says in Isaiah 35 say to them, who's he talking to, not to those who are expiring, but to another people who are not identified, who are evidently in the wilderness with them you say to them your God will come, he will vindicate he will save you and when they hear that it says, the lame leap and the eyes of the blind are opened what a word they have received it's more than just the pabulum of well meaning nicety it's a word of life, that's tempered and carries the resonance of God, because the people who speak it, have themselves passed through wilderness experience where God, who seemed absent, came to their rescue at the last minute, they know their God, as a God who saves, and they can say to the hopeless and the destitute, your God will come he will save you, he will deliver you and when they hear that they leap so too our prayer no more effectual than the reality from which it springs the knowledge of God to which it testifies, to pray for the peace of Jerusalem is not a cop out it's an ultimate challenge of the most ultimate kind and if it cannot be met by the church, there will be no peace, either for Jerusalem, or for the nation the stakes are enormous, they are ultimate, and it rests upon the response of the people who are called to pray, for the peace of Jerusalem.

Almost every time I give any kind of talk on Israel in the last days and what will be required in trial and devastation, in the time of Jacob's trouble invariably, someone will ask me, at the end, how should we pray? If the PLO and the presence of the Palestinians and Arabs is God's press to bring Israel down and into the place of death that they might cry out we've been praying the wrong way we've been praying for God to remove the very thing that he has established to bring Israel to the place of ultimate distress so how should we pray?

Well, not by your well-meaning intentions, not by your logic or by your thought, you have got to pray the prayers of God, and you cannot pray God's prayers except that you're in communion with God, and that communion is the fellowship of his suffering and the reality of the cross if we're a church that has avoided that, we condemn our prayers for being well-meaning humanistic religious it will not affect the peace of Jerusalem the peace of Jerusalem is the restoration of Jerusalem and of that nation in the last days out of death that's why it says in verse 5, for the thrones are set there for judgment, the thrones of the house of David is spoken before we come to pray for the peace of Jerusalem what's that doing there? why that reference? why that allusion to thrones? because throne is

the statement of government and rule the thrones are set there for judgment God is going to judge the nation with equity and with justice Jerusalem is the theocratic center, but the nation through whom God will judge needs itself first to be judged and the people who pray that Jerusalem will be God's throne of judgment need themselves first to have welcomed it for themselves we've spoken before about the plague of humanism it seems like it's something that has to do with a lot of the we've spoken before about the bane of humanism, particularly true of modern Israel, but also of the church, there's still within the church a strong strain of a humanistic perception of both themselves and of God and it's for want of knowledge of ourselves and our own nature that we pray naive cathartic

prayers even if we read in the scripture that Jerusalem has passed through a great time of trouble or whatever why would we have not already known that by knowing ourselves, why would we not already have known that without a travail there's no birthing, and without a death there's no resurrection in other words, it wouldn't have required if we'd have been intimate with the prophetic spirit it wouldn't require that we would just read all these verses in the bible and go, oh yeah, right here Jerusalem's got to suffer before she is restored we would know it both of ourselves and of them and so there's a strong strain of of human presumption and humanism that still believes that if we just come with our best of intentions the situation can be ameliorated and it's a gross avoidance and so our

attitude towards Israel is the most significant statement of where we in fact are nothing more reveals the condition of the church than its attitude towards Israel and if it's that level of humanism or sentimentality that's the statement of where we are in general Israel functions to reveal the church's condition even in Israel's apostate condition it's a remarkable thing the symmetry the reciprocal action of Israel and the church that Israel plays for us now even in its unbelieving condition to reveal what nothing else would have would have more accurately revealed about where in fact we are the fact that what Reggie is saying that we did not anticipate calamity and judgment for Israel as being a necessity before the glory that there's a suffering that precedes the glory shows that we

have not surrendered to this axiomatic truth of the faith itself and that we could have gone along from Sunday to Sunday saying amen and hallelujah and singing the choruses over this betrayal of the heart of the faith and never have recognized it Israel finds us out Dan you had your hand up does anyone else have any? the principle you're saying about doesn't apply to all the nations what shook me off was that I grew up by the water here and the best thing that happens to our nations is the presence of God at some moments oh God you know help our nations it doesn't mean things along the same lines as the nations bring the calamity we have to have a whole vast reassessment of the word judgment because I would say and I will say again that nothing is more at the heart of our knowledge of God

than the issue of judgment judgment is the key in our perception of God as God and to factor judgment out or to make it something less or other than what it is is to diffuse God as God judgment is at the heart of God when his judgments are in the earth the world will learn righteousness and if judgment is for us displeasing or distasteful or we get squeamish and we don't like it we have not recognized the redemptive power of judgment that it is not something antithetical to God's love it is God's love judgment is God operating in love when lesser means have been spurned and is required ultimately to bring judgment painful devastating but in the end true redemptive and it brings peace so we are a generation that whitewashes that coats over that gets by we don't want to deal head on with

real issues in a real way but to welcome God's judgment in them and so we we don't have the peace the shalom of God and who can define shalom Aveinu shalom aleichem peace be unto you but it's more than

the absence of conflict or tension we want a syrupy peace of a shallow kind that removes tension God wants us to receive tension all the way through the judgment of the issue that we might then by it come into the authentic shalom of God the peace that passes understanding can you imagine what the millennial age will be we'll not only be singing and dancing horrors Aveinu shalom aleichem but the peace of God will be felt manifest palpable you'll go to any place in the world and you'll have an instant amity friendship without fear without suspicion even if in the church alone if we had that

peace look mama mia what a delight what prevents it the lack of judgment the unwillingness to invite it the skirting and the cutting of corners the unwillingness to face hard issues and deal with hard truths wanting a cheap route rather than the way of God that leads to peace ladies first praying it was always my question my heart how to pray but isn't that also the time when the church is committed to pray the truth where God is just teaching us for the peace of Jerusalem and I hope I say it right the church like you just said first has to be broken and has to have gone through the wilderness and through all the suffering so it is ready to bring the encouragement and the word of God you will make it so isn't it dangerous to pray now

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/3/SID3098.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/art-katz/praying-the-peace-of-jerusalem-part-1/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net