

Signs of the Times

by Art Katz

The decade of the 90's is a time of choice and decision for the church, and will determine the course of human history.

Scripture: Matthew 24:9, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 6:17, Philippians 3:20, 2 Timothy 3:1-5, Hebrews 11:13-16, 1 Peter 2:11, 1 John 2:15-17, Revelation 6:9, Revelation 13:16-17

Topics: "Apostasy vs. Apostolicity", "The True Church in a Global System"

Description

Art Katz delivers a prophetic assessment of the 1990s, emphasizing the radical choices facing the church: apostasy or apostolicity. He warns that the true church will be the impediment to a global unification that seeks to undermine God's purposes, and that believers must prepare for persecution and opposition. Katz highlights the dangers of a society increasingly driven by consumerism and entertainment, which distracts from spiritual discernment and maturity. He calls for a return to an apocalyptic expectation and a deeper quality of faith, urging the church to live as pilgrims and sojourners in a world that is becoming irredeemably evil. The message concludes with a call to sanctification and a warning against the seductive nature of convenience in a world that is moving towards a beast system.

Transcript

Introduction: Prophetic Assessment of decade of the 90's

What I'm going to share tonight really deserves a three-day seminar. I'm just going to trust the Lord to edit it and bring the most salient points forth for your consideration. And just to tell you that it's been my single and exclusive message since the return from my three-month trip overseas, during the very time when the nations were being toppled in the East Europe, where I had been many times and had not thought such a thing could happen and happen with the suddenness with which they took place. So, we would be foolish to think that these massive changes that came in a space of days and weeks that not only toppled regimes of such monolithic proportion, but they're very ideology. That somehow the whole of Marxism, communism, and socialism has come into kind of disrepute even with their own people. It has lost its biting edge and something has happened. God has flicked the switch and I was trying to sense in my spirit what these things mean. And what you'll hear tonight is a kind of prophetic commentary on the recent events and the shadow that they cast for the church in the decade of the 90's. This is not a forecast; I've never been that kind of prophetic figure that predicts and I almost was forced by the Lord by a gentle nudge to even come up with the statement that you're going to hear tonight. So, it's a kind of an assessment rather

than a prediction of events taking place in the world in places where I have traveled knowing how unshakable those great eastern European Marxist places were and what they signify I think for the church.

Apostasy or Apostolicity

Things to ponder and consider and taken to your spirit, because the decade of the 90's, I praise God have been around for a few decades, but this decade is absolutely formative and final. I'll say this with complete authority, that is if the Lord should not come by the end of this decade, by the way we should live as if we expect that, but whether He will come at the conclusion of this decade or not, the issues will have been a joined and will have been established before this decade is out. The whole alignment that shall take place in the world: politically, socially, ecological, logically, economically, and religiously will have been set in such a way as to be immovable. So, it's a time of choice and of decision and of alignment, because as you're going to hear from me tonight. That when the smoke clears there is a centrifugal polarizing process taking place that will compel us into one radical camp or another, and they're simply will not be a neutral ground to enjoy for those of us who do not have a stomach for radical alternatives. That the very nature of this age and its conclusion, the consummation toward which we are heading compels us toward radical choices and the two radical choices for the church will be apostasy or apostolicity. We will either be apostate or apostolic, we will be radically out of the faith or radically in the faith. And to just to say it in a word, we're going to be required at last to be saints, I mean for real saints! Who really have it together, who are single eyed and intent, who recognize the seriousness of the hour and for some reason as inoffensive as we are, we're going to be the object of a very calculated opposition and oppression and persecution unto martyrdom and death. And that this should not take us by surprise.

The true church as the impediment to global political and economic unification

That these have always been the realities faced by that segment of the church, which is indeed true church and that the forces are now released or loosed by which in the final consummating hours of human history, the church is going to be the one, the true church, the one impediment, the one obstruction to a kind of design of an ecumenical and global kind who which we will be the ungainly round peg in the square hole. So, I think the first thing that I need to say is that however wonderful now that the doors are open and the walls are down for a kind of evangelism at the places where it has been a difficult or opposed. That there's yet a more significant factor that we need to consider that though we knew that we were moving toward a European pack of nations of a kind of economic confederation. What we need to see now is not a European pack, but a global pack. That the one single factor that has constituted the division in the world between east and west and democratic and socialist regimes is in effect nullified. That though it the sounds of it the vocabulary of that ideology may continue, it continues only in a ceremonial way. It is no longer the divisive factor that was once the impediment between a consolidation between east and west. It has been removed and it symbolized by the unification of Germany itself and having moved freely through the two Germany's over these last 10 and 15 years. It's a remarkable kind of consolidation and it's coming together just like that.

We need to know that what is happening politically and economically I'm not just haphazard and circumstantial factors, but that God Himself has removed the restraint that has kept the world in opposing camps and has Himself laid the foundation by which there can be a global unification and a world economic system. For which most of the worldlings those who dwell on the earth will celebrate, because it comes under the words of unity and peace. And who could not desire those two things in an age that has punctuated by violence and disorder and confrontation in the threat even of atomic annihilation. So, it's a

very seductive and powerful thing that will come to us in the name of unity and peace. The only reason for which we will resist it is that we have been forewarned in the apocalyptic scriptures in the book of Revelation and Thessalonians, in such places, that this is called the beast system and it's an antichrist system. Humanly contrived opposed to God and opposed to God's purposes and seeking a kind of uniformity at the price of freedom and the issues of the faith, which is the whole purpose for our being. It seeks to set in order something that will usurp or proceed our God's own intention by which His creation in His globe is to be unified, namely the coming of Himself and His kingdom. So, this is an antichrist not only opposed, but one like as, seeking himself by his own human and governmental way to establish a system. Which most of the world will pant after and all the more not only, because of its desirability, but because this figure will rise and I don't know whether it's a single figure or a composite figure or what. Will be attended by lying signs and wonders that will be for the unwary and the unspiritual sophisticated. A final concluding sign that "how can you resist this and who can make war with the Beast." Now we need to expect a parallel religious phenomenon.

The true church as the impediment to global religious unification: Issue of Doctrine

That the world is moving toward a political and economic unification we should anticipate as well a religious global system of an ecumenical kind. And Paul who knows me through the years and some of you others who have followed know, that I have always had a churning in my spirit, of restiveness, in a discontent, and a suspicion about this whole charismatic renewal. Sensing in today kind of conspiratorial element largely motivated by and engineered by Catholic authorities and I believe that this now is going to come in a full configuration and power. And the interesting thing is that just as ideology is no longer the divisive factor and will be sublimated in the interest of world economic and political peace. Doctrine will be sublimated and made to be a factor that it no longer stands as the divisive element between the great the catholic and protestant church bodies. But those who think that doctrine is not a matter to be relegated to the dust bin for the conveniences in the expediency of unity. Will find themselves embarrassingly irritating to those who pant after unity at any price. So, it's not at all an accident that in Revelation 6:9 that those who were slain were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.

Doctrine is not some kind of antiseptic code, doctrine is the word of God, the essential teachings of the faith that make the faith the faith and that if they are removed you have some kind of husk of a semantic kind of Christianity, but without the power thereof. Those that will be jealous for the word of God and then insist upon the Word of God will find themselves candidates for the things that I've just read from Revelation 6:9, to be slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. There's going to be a new basis I believe for ecumenical unity it will not be the word of God, because that has been the divisive thing, that's what has separated Catholics from Protestants.

The new basis will be signs and wonders. The very same fact that by which the Antichrist establishes his political economics sway by the demonstration of a supernatural power will also become the persuasive factor religiously. And who can argue with signs and wonders and who has the discernment to distinguish between lying signs and wonders and those that have their origin in God and the fulfillment of His purpose. Any of us here tonight have come to that kind of sensitivity? I'll tell you what, many of us here tonight and Christendom at large are bored, restless, and discontent. Looking for something. There's been something vacuous in our Christianity. That for a season the charismatic things seem to fulfill, but now it's waning and that makes us all the more candidates for excitement, for diversity, for novelty and many who are indiscriminating and lacking in discernment and looking for excitement will gravitate to signs and wonders which will be for them the confirmation that this must be of God.

Mature Church (Heavenly Dwellers) vs. Earthly Dwellers

You say Art, "how can we come to that quality of discernment that saves us from deception?" Well, I know that there's a gift of discernment and I appreciate that, but the discernment that I think that is wanting is that which is held by the church as the church corporately, a church that has come to maturity. That speaks often one to another in the fear of the Lord, not about gossip or petty things, but the things that are the issues that constitute our life. We have to start turning our chairs around, we have to start moving from looking at the back of our heads the speaking often one to another.

Iron sharpening iron to distinguish and to discern the currents and the subtlety of all of the things that are already moving in our generation and shall be brought to such a pitch of power and persuasiveness that accept that we are dwellers in heavenly places we will be victims of deception with all those who dwell on the earth. And you'll notice if you look over the book of Revelation that there seems to be a continual reiteration of two categories of beings, those who dwell on the earth as against those whom the Lord will call from the four corners of heaven.

And I want to say that I believe that you can abide, you can live in Raleigh or Durham and either be an earth dweller or a have your citizenship in heaven. You need to begin to understand that these are very real alternatives and categories and those who dwell on the earth even those who call themselves Christian, but dwell on the earth that's where they're effectual abode is. They look down rather than look up. Those that look up are those who see an open heaven, even when they're being stoned and see Jesus at the right hand of the Father and the glory of God.

I'll tell you; I'm being forced because of the shortness of the time could compress, but this thing about Stephen, the first martyr you know the, first always prefigures the last. The first is always a statement, always a suggestive of things that are intrinsic principles that pertain to martyrdom as is in the case of Stephen. The fact that his face shone like an angel, the fact that he wasn't in competition and contention with those who saw themselves as the doctors of religion.

As the establishment and the men in places of authority. That there was a powerful antagonism by them against this man who was a mere waiter on run tables, a busboy. And his face shone like an angel and that even when he was being pelted with stones unto death, he looked up and I don't think it was the last moments heroism or last moments desperation, but I think that that was his habitual posture. He was in the earth, but he did not dwell there. He looked up at heaven, like Paul who saw the things that were invisible and eternal and made his moment his present afflictions both momentary and light.

Hey this is not just the little curiosities of history about the early church this is nuts and bolts survival requirement for us, except that we are of the stature and of the same substance and stuff and disposition in mentality of a Stephen and a Paul we'll find ourselves in the other camp that will oppose them unto the death. Because we're moving to that final consummation where we will be the one or the other. So, I want to say a word about the social character of the world that we inhabit, what we can expect, the factors are already working.

It's just that they're going to become more pronounced is really nothing new, but that there's something in exorable working. Sorry for the fancy words. I'm even sparing you from saying ineluctable, which I've got written here too, but what the two words suggest is this there's an energy, there's a dynamism that is built into the very structure of the world itself that moves it in a compulsive way to a heating up to the things that are inflexible, cannot be altered, not to be overcome, which will eventuate in such filth, in such unmitigated

evil, in such expression of violence and corruption as we would shudder now to contemplate.

Return to an Apocalyptic Expectation

I will repeat that, forces are working that make the world inescapably evil and corrupt and we need to have an apocalyptic expectation. If we had a three-day seminar one of the messages is on apocalypticism. What was the mindset of the early church? It was apocalyptic and expected a sudden conclusion for human history by the intervening, the coming of the Lord at a final moment of duress to vindicate the saints who remain. That doesn't mean they just happen to be left over, but they have survived a bitter process of persecution that have put other saints asleep, because those that are asleep in Christ will rise first. Asleep doesn't mean you retire. Asleep means what happened to Stephen that after he had said "Lord lay not this sin to their charge", he fell asleep. The purposes of God for his earthly life were concluded and no man could have just destroyed that life before that conclusion. We're going to find many falling asleep in Christ in that same way. I expect myself could be one. It's not because I'm melodramatic, it's the very logic, the inescapable logic of true faith invites opposition and persecution. The fact that we have not experienced it is a statement to our shame rather than a complement to our faith. That we have thought that persecution is a feature of Christian life in Iron Curtain countries or Africa shows how naive we are. It is not a geographical matter; it is a spiritual matter and you have only to come into the realities of the kind of faith that the world abhors where the darkness cannot abide the light to begin to experience the kinds of things that have historically affected true believers in every generation and will especially at the last.

The power of merchandise on our children

We need to be warned for our own children's sake about the power of the subliminal and overt appeals from merchandise that will make of them merchandise. I praise God that I have the advantage of more than a half centuries existence and have been a depression baby and watch the whole phenomenon take place. That what how the simplicity of our life has been altered and what was first submitted to us as luxury becomes within a very short time necessity and necessities of such a kind that if you don't have them, you think you're going to perish.

Our whole lifestyle has become invested with goods and buying and selling and having and getting and spending and we're going to miss, this is the inexorable thing, this is continually working, it cannot be pacified. It must always seek for fresh market, fresh investment, fresh manipulation, fresh distortion, and one aspect demographically of that market that increases, because of the way things are constituted is our youth, our children. Already victims that are marketed in so we're going to see again this is just the unparalleled thing that ends up in making the souls of men merchandise as it says in the book of Revelation.

These concerts, these sport figures, these multi-million-dollar contracts for guys just getting out of college or a black boxer. You say, "well these guys deserve it, because look what they bring to the box office", that's exactly the point. Though it is so set up of course that it's enormously profitable, so they make 13 or 15 million for a few minutes of work, but what does that do to the whole value structure of the civilization that idolizes them with a particular ability that they have.

We need to understand there's an enormous price being paid morally in the whole fabric of a civilization that pants after these glitzy superstars of the punk rock culture or sports or whatever it is and it's a powerful fascination for our own children. How many times as I travel like this do I stay in the homes of

ministers in the bedrooms of their children and look at the walls covered with the posters of the sport or music figures. And so we just need to be alerted and to resist it is going to require sacrifice, but unless we will we're going to find our children swallowed up and panting after idols that diminish the One whom they should adorn and follow namely the Lord Himself.

And I just wonder about such kids in the high-tech power of the equipment that that these glitzy stars travel with it. Going to one of these concerts and sound and sight and bombarded into their senses. To come the next morning and sit in the church and listen to a pastor in monotone teaching Sunday School or giving a sermon. Everything is stacked against us, but we need to be much more conscious of the kinds of forces that are at play at the world and that calculate and encourage a kind of impatient desire for gratification.

That everything is being put before them for products, for having, and what would happen, for example if the economy collapses. What would happen if there will be a global economic distress or any other factor that makes gratification to be delayed? I think we're going to see an impatience that will express itself not only in anger but in violence. I'm asking you to brace yourself that one of the factors at the end of the age and it has always characterized civilization in the final act death grasps is unmitigated violence.

Which already you can't pick up a paper without reading about a teenage kid who has blown out the brains of his parents while they sleep and but we're going to see an increase of violence that a senseless, brutal, vile, malicious, and cruel of a kind that will become so commonplace that we can no longer be astonished by it. Because the vexation and the exasperation of impatience in a world that has encouraged impatience that cannot be gratified will explode in the competition for space, for jobs, for security, for having, in violence in such ways that that anarchy will threaten the civilized world and the only answer to world anarchy is world despotism.

Danger of Amusements

And so, it will be another factor that will encourage a kind of global imposition, a system of restraints which is called the beast system. I woke up a couple of mornings ago with the word "obliterate" that's what I get when I caught a peak of a program that the son of the pastor was watching at whose home I was staying called "Robot Cop". One of the most filthy, mucky, vicious, explosive scenes, have you noticed that for you older ones, remember, we used to read books like "Gone with the Wind." There was nothing to read a book of 400 or 500 or 600 pages. I used to check out six books a month as a kid in Brooklyn, New York every month. I was a reader, there was no TV and then the age of the visible graphic thing came and reading began to decline, because we're raising up a generation of culturally illiterate or non-literate people. It's not that they can't read, they can read manuals and the technical ability, but they do not enjoy reading. They do not delight in words, in concepts, in meditation and in thought, it removes the very critical faculty that would be able to resist the enormous powers that this age will generate. All these factors coming together at the final being brought to a boil and frothing over, but I just noticed in the little exposure that I get like seeing this program it's so episodic, their episodes but they don't they only last that 10 seconds, 12 seconds, 15 seconds, a confrontation between a man and woman, a hug and embrace, then there's a passionate and this and that. Then the next scene is a violence, then the next scene is this, next scene, next scene until the final conclusion in cause cartwheeling and exploding a bomb, it's over. Where's the plot? Where's the storyline? Where's the development? Where's the character development? We do not have it anymore, it's just an embodying of visual images of a violent and sensual kind could be brought to explosive conclusion. That's it. No moral, hey we're paying a price for that. "Amusement". We

need just a dwell on that word, that any word that is prefixed with the letter A means the negation of the word that follows. "a theist" is one who denies God as not being, "a musement" denies musing, it nullifies to muse or what does it mean to "muse"? To muse is to reflect, to muse is to think, to muse is to contemplate, the very thing that distinguishes mankind in its humanity has been stolen and were not even alert and aware by a generation that has so emphasized amusement and always having to find a novel amusement and a more spectacular kind of thing that would catch the imagination and therefore it's an inexorable downward corruption without remedy that becomes increasingly vile, vicious, evil and destructive.

The world is irredeemably evil: Need perseverance

An apocalyptic view that the church held two thousand years ago much closer to the end than we presently are is that the world is irredeemably evil. And we who have taken liberal arts courses don't really in our heart believe that. We think somehow that progress is inevitable or things will be made better. We need to line up with a biblical expectation for the end and the two key words that will constitute the mentality of saints who will overcome is a proper "eschatology" and a proper "apocalyptic" view of the end.

The end is at hand and shall shortly come to pass and if I have been distinguished by in any way in the small kinds of audience and the following that I can be said to have it's always because I've been looked upon this kind of end-time spokesman, but I want to tell you that I myself have never been so aware of the end as I am presently am. Even end-time vocabulary can become another catchword, another kind of cutesy religious vocabulary which we don't in fact really believe.

Well, we will have an end time mentality in a proper eschatological from the Greek word the end "eschaton" and a proper apocalyptic conclusion for the end of the age when we begin to live as if we believe that's true. And will not regret the loss of our hi-fives or the vacation or something like that. "Lord don't come yet", I need first to enjoy this what we need to be saying is "come Lord Jesus". When I saw that filthy mucky episodic program on TV that other night where everything was obliterated and in the final conflict between the robots figure who is the hero.

Have we come to that, that a robot is a hero, as against these murky guys with their pigtailed and their guns that they just aim it and pull a trigger it doesn't just inflict damage it obliterates the painful thing that is for them an irritant. Like divorce obliterates, like abortion obliterates, to remove, this is a disposable age and we have not the patience and the fortitude and the stamina to see things through. As believers we won't stay in a fellowship if there's a problem and we'll look for an easier place or will give up the marriage, well what would it Trump just say in New York the multi-billionaire "it's just not working out", if ever I wanted to give a guy a knuckle sandwich, Lord forgive me.

"It's just working out." Oh tough. Well, I guess it is yes, I that must be irritating it's not work so what do you do scrap it and dispose of it and obliterate it as a vexing problem, because you can afford to do it only costs 20 million and a house in Connecticut. We may not have those advantages folks, but we have subscribed to that mentality more than we realize. To solve our problems through obliteration, remove the fetus, remove the marriage, remove the fellowship or whatever it is everything is calculated toward impatience and toward violent elimination the problem, just like the Jews in Nazi Germany.

They are our misfortune. So what do you do them? You remove them. I'm concerned for my own kinsmen in Israel with the problem of the Palestinian if they don't find themselves tempted to assign a solution of the same kind through obliteration. Who has a penchant in a disposition for a problem solving, for

believing God, for seeking His grace and for His wisdom and His counsel for seeing something through and believing for the resolution that God can bring however difficult the problem?

So, are we dwell as in the earth or in the heavenly place? It's interesting that in Revelation 9:21 they repented not of their murders nor of their sorceries nor the fornication nor of their thieves. The final opposition to God has this character- violent murderers, violence as the alleviation of frustration almost like a magical way of removal. To remove the consequences of problems that our carnality has created and that we don't know how to solve. Those that kill with the sword and with hunger and with death are called the beasts of the earth. It's not an accident that God calls it a beast system, because it is bestial, opposed to God and to all that God intended for man in His image.

Anabaptist testimony of a radical faith

I had the experience of being in Switzerland on this overseas trip and they took me one night to Zurich. I was in Zurich showing the saints there the places where the first Anabaptist martyrs gave their lives and if you don't know what the word Anabaptist is shame on you. This is the radical wing of the Reformation that were burned at the stake, drowned, in prison, because they were considered, well it's a good question, why could not the great religious Reformation bodies tolerate the existence of this radical minority of the faith who refused to take up the sword? They were opposed to the use of violence, they could not sanction the state as being the kingdom of God they look for another Kingdom, in another city, in another builder, whose maker was God. And why could they be allowed to live the inoffensive lives. They were industrious, they were neat, but they were hounded, they were pursued, they were vexed, and they were driven. And I took Swiss believers to the places where that had its origin in Zurich of which they knew nothing. Show them where they were first thrown into the river the first meeting that was held in a house outside of a church building, where the baptism, adult baptism, was first performed and so on, the caves where they had their meetings and had a special escape chamber that if they were accosted that children could at least find exit. I went into a cell, a dungeon, that still stands, almost four centuries later and for the first time I realized that incarceration is torture. That actually would have been a greater mercy burned at the stake or drown, then to rot for years in the cell where you cannot stand upright, you cannot stretch your arms out and just such a terrible repressive confinement and be allowed to rot there. Because you carried a quality of faith that even the Reformation religious bodies could not abide or tolerated. And in that same Zurich that was the seat of this radical Reformation wing rooted out and extirpated by the father of the Swiss Reformation in Zurich a man by the name of Singly whose statue stands outside the church with a sword in one hand on the Bible in the other who by the way died on the battlefield.

Depravity of humanistic logic

They have what they now call "needle park" and they took me there one night it was like a descent into hell I had never seen anything like it in all of my travels. To see these precious kids from middle class homes beautifully dressed with their leather jackets and stuff with their sleeves up looking for a place to puncture a vein and blood running down arms and legs in a park that is given over for their use where the city of Zurich provides free hypodermic needles to the tune of seven thousand a night with a free AIDS testing station.

In some kind of humanistic logic that will save them from the increasing threat of AIDS by at least providing clean needles. I've never seen anything more ghastly. I saw two precious girls one holding the mirror for the other trying to find a vein that had not yet been used in the neck. And all I want to say about

that tonight is this, that I think that that is a precursor it foreshadows and shows what is going to be the necessary condescension of Western societies everywhere could provide free needles from prophylactics to AIDS testing to save ourselves from teenage pregnancies from AIDS and all these things.

It's society's last gasp. They don't know what to do. In order to somehow quell, at least put some kind of lid on things that are burgeoning through epidemic proportion, but what happens when a society particularly quote Christian society gives free meals and free AIDS test, free prophylactics. It may not be intended as such, but what it morally means is this it's a condoning of the very evil that they're thinking somehow to repress. And that has a consequence for the moral fabric of society that further makes it a vacuum and ironically because people cannot find a life of moral significance which is what men I think made by God instinctively looks for will find themselves in their desperation seeking the fix.

So, in a word what society is on is a kind of paradoxical rat maze that whatever they do in their attempt to defend themselves from the issues of the day further compounds the evil and makes it inescapable. I'm expecting widespread disillusionment and dejection particularly perhaps in Eastern Europe where now a whole generation has the opportunity to taste the advantages of democracy and freedom. But you know we need to ask what has that meant for us? And if the ultimate meaning of freedom is modelled dissolution and decay and corruption, they're going to find themselves more depressed and more dejected at the failure of this hope then whenever they did under the grayness of a marxist ideology and regime.

And the thing that intrigues me about this is that a little bit that I know about the rise of Nazism is that the fertile ground for Nazism came in a Germany that had collapsed in its Democratic aspirations. That gave opportunity for the rise of Hitler in the condition of nihilism that pervaded that society. Nihilism is a word that the sociologist invented who would describe a 20th century phenomenon that never before existed in modern times and will be the pervasive factor at the end of the a that move the whole world toward a global totalitarianism.

A dejection and a depression of such abject hopelessness that expresses itself in a violence that doesn't give a rap. A fiery conclusion where everything is brought down and the people that have that are entirely without hope. The skinheads that are rising up in our communities are already the first representatives of what will become global movement. What will this mean for the church? I'm not describing these things to cause panic, but how's the church going to fare in such a world of unmitigated evil and deepening moral crisis and corruption.

Radical quality of faith: Persecuted or Persecutors

I'll tell you what in an age that was not as radical as that most of us would have been content to remain in evangelical and charismatic situations and it would have survived satisfied basically our spiritual needs, but the very radical thing process taking place in the world will make that kind of conventional church situation profoundly ungratified. And we're going to find a shift in the movement I sense in which true believers sensing their need to stand in such an age that we'll be looking for a deeper quality of faith and relationship and what they can find in conventional and appropriate Church environments.

Those who have not the courage of the stomach or the desire or have not the need and don't see the need to come into a deeper quality of faith in relationship we can remain in such situations will find themselves irritated by those who are seeking a more radical quality of faith. And even to the point where the one will call the other "heretic" "heretics" and will begin to begin to feel an oppression if not a persecution against us. Till we will come to the fulfillment of the scripture of the statement of Jesus Himself I believe that they

will kill us and claim they are doing God a service.

If we go on to the radical quality of faith that we will need to stand in such an age as I'm describing. The emerging true church will finally grow sick of the hype and by now predictability of a merely phrase-logical Christianity. It will seek the deeper reality of faith in relationship paying the cost and increasingly taking on the appearance of pilgrim, stranger, and sojourner in the earth. Would you say that describes us presently? Are we strange? Do we like to feel strange?

The fact of the matter is we have been looking for a Christianity that is comfortably Orthodox and yet does not require of us such a thing as will make us to be strange from those around us in the world or Christendom itself. But I want to say, that if we will go on to be the remnant and overcoming people of God of very necessity, we will find ourselves taking on increasingly the very appearance of strangers, pilgrims, and sojourners in the earth. We will not be able to go along with the muck the filth of violence and the whole value reversal that will be taking place, because it's already at work where evil becomes good and good becomes evil.

A whole total value reversal, it's an insanity, it's an Alice in Wonderland. That because you hold biblical principles or the Ten Commandments and notice what it says in Revelation and they died had the testimony of Jesus and they held the commandments of God. I believe that God's final people and this would have been another message if we have had three times together. What are the definitive characteristics of the remnant church? People who hold their commandments of God. "Thou shalt not".

In a world that says "thou shalt". That if you and that if you do not, you'll get a complex and you'll do psychological damage to your kids or after all their alternative lifestyles and sexual modes of preference blah blah blah blah blah. And if you call their modes of preference an abomination in God's sight according to its description in Scripture, you're going to find yourself in a very touchy place, because good is going to be called evil and evil is going to be called good.

What then will happen to those who stand for that which is good? Even today, we had a conference in San Francisco and the principalities and powers of the air of in all places of that city and a brother said "you know Art if any pastor in this city today will describe homosexuality", you know that even the word homosexual is a euphemism? That the word in the Bible is sodomy and that if you'll identify it as that and that God is the same, yesterday, forever. His values have not changed.

He still looks upon it as abomination and that AIDS is the judgment of God of those who have recklessly not considered the warnings of God about that indulgence. That your life will not be safe in San Francisco today. You know if we're going to become strange, we get where even though you look differently and I believe in I'm expecting that the light that was in Stephens face that shone like an angel will be increasingly our experience also. Not some self-affected spirituality or amen and hallelujah charismatic, but an authentic sanctifying work of God in the deep character and life of God's people until they begin to exude the very light of God and they're not even conscious of it.

Art's personal testimony: shining lamp

I don't know Inger remembers, but in my earliest believing I was just a few months old in the Lord. Returning to the teaching system in California had left as one of the leading faculty radicals that come back so to speak with the Bible around my arm say "Jesus is the answer" and lose all my friends the first night back and was such anger and such bitterness and such filth and profanity. That I had to get out of a

moving car. The next day as the woman at whose home I was saying a Jewish colleague broke out in such a violent filth against me, because I was just a starry-eyed innocent believer who believed that he had been saved than that Jesus is the Christ. Well, I was at lunch one day and this is what I want to relate you with another Jewish colleague God bless her, taking pills and seeing the psychiatrist in an illicit relationship with another teacher against their husbands back. And I had been witnessing that to her the ability that I had as a young believer, but this time I was just eating very silently and we were eating opposite of each other in the table and I could feel something coming out of this woman billowing out right like daggers shooting at me in a vile billis hatred and I finally looked up and sure enough she was foaming at the mouth. I hadn't said boo. And finally, she slapped her fork down she said "even when you're silent she said you're a living accusation."

Pilgrims

Our very unwillingness to participate in what certain segments of Christendom will increasingly condone as good. I'll very posture, our pilgrims faces, the very sanctification that God is working in us will elicit that same kind of angry opposition against us. We need to anticipate it. And one of the reasons I was in Africa with Gary was a memorial service in Zimbabwe who are believers have been hacked to death three years before. Precious saints of whom the world is not worthy.

You are equal and they exceed you in every regard multilingual, skilled, articulate. People who have could have made their success in the world hands down choosing to live in a remote segment of this nation, where there had been a civil war and was now under black Authority and that took and many of the whites made their exodus, but many of the Christians remained in the hope of working out a new quality of relationship, because of their faith. That this nation would not become a bloodbath and that there could be a basis for harmony between the races not to some socialistic or humanistic design but on the basis of the faith and the redeeming power of the Lord Jesus.

And so, they chose they were led by God to this remote location never armed themselves that were in an area that was hostile and victimized often by bands of these marauding racist Marxist oriented guerrillas. And sure enough, one night bang, the end came to them in a very sudden way. And I had an opportunity to be at that service and to share and to hear from the black brother who was the witness of their martyrdom. In fact, I also in Johannesburg interviewed a year-old girl who was at that time who is presently seeing a psychiatrist, because she was allowed to survive and was given a note to explain the cause of the death of her spiritual family.

But is seeing a psychiatrist because the baby of one of the mothers was ripped from her arms and had his brains splashed out at her feet. And this black brother said to me, "you know Art, said there was not a sound to cry there was not a pleading for their lives they went as lambs to the slaughter." It came in a moment of suddenness there was a moment of extremity, but when it came, they had such a sublime confidence in the sovereignty of God that though they could not understand the mystery of their death and why it should be required, because they were doing wonderful works.

They were building fish ponds and chicken coops and irrigation projects to lift up the economy of a section of that nation that for seven years of drought had suffered a starvation and yet God allowed them to be taken like that. Here's what I want to say saints what we are in a moment of extremity and an unsuspecting moment is what in fact we are. What we exhibit is what we are and something was exhibited by their patience and suffering and in death and not pleading for their earthly lives, because they were

already in a heavenly place it was all the same to them whether they lived or died. If the one or the other, they would glorify God.

Martyr's mindset: Must prepare now to resist beast system

They had a martyr's mentality before it was required of them and I believe it's a mentality that will characterize the final remnant church of Jesus Christ at the end of the age. And it's not a mentality that we're going to find in the last moments heroism when something comes upon us suddenly, but one that we need now to seek for and to establish and to live. Martyrdom is not a prescription of how to die it's a prescription of how to live. If my marriage has taken any turn for the good by the wonderful grace that has come it's the acknowledgment that that martyrdom is how you live now.

Patience and forbearance and meekness and the confidence in God's utter sovereignty even when things go wrong and they are inexplicable and we have not been warned. We've got a long way to go, where we need to gird our loins and to understand what the decade of the 90's means and seek the Lord to be a prepared people who will not collapse when opposition comes against us but will glorify Him even in our suffering. What will we do if the only way to sustain life is to take the mark of the beast?

And to take the mark of the beast there's not only to compromise your faith, but to suffer an eternal punishment from God. This is not some innocuous thing it has an eternal ramification and many will take that mark because buying and selling is sustaining their physical and bodily lives has a greater priority than loyalty to Him. And I want to suggest that we need to begin now to pray to ask the Lord for alternatives to taking the mark of the beast. One thing we need to do is to begin to extricate ourselves from a world system that wants us to be utterly dependent on its plastic cards and dependent on its systems, which have everything every right thing to commend it in terms of convenience if not luxury, but convenience will be out undoing.

I just saw her brother on this trip was building a 300-thousand-dollar house for speculation when you said I'd we're going to have to live in it for tax advantage. I couldn't bring I didn't have the courage to say it, but what I wanted to say to him and I created a Spirit of God will communicate it is what price are you paying for that convenience? What price are you paying for that advantage that tax concession morally for your own children to live in a grandiose three hundred and fifty thousand dollar house that will further corrupt them and they then where they presently are which is presently not a good place.

We pay a price for convenience and I don't say this is a thus saith the Lord but every time that we submit to the world that system its mentality for convenience or for luxury or for gratification, because it seems to be the mode of life and everyone condones it something I think is embossed on our hand with every transaction. I have a sense that this mark of the beast is not some last final moments in printing, but something already in progress every time we yield ourselves to the world in its spirit for convenience's sake or conversely resisted and yield to the Lord, we're taking on so to speak his name and the day of the Lord will reveal what has been successively embossed by continuous transactions either with the world or with God. We need to know that the issue of the mark of the beast is not a last moments decision it's a decision being made now and being made daily.

The Church in community

And I wanted to suggest this to you and not because I'm in it but I believe that agriculturally based communities of God's people who are able to sustain life through their own labor and faith and the growing

of food in the providing of shelter might be one of the most viable if not only alternatives to taking that mark on us at the end of the age and I've been in that now for 10 to 15 years and it's no picnic. In fact, it's a suffering before it's a glory. To live with God's people and that intensity of life called community if that intimacy that inescapable at the humiliation of being found out of where you really are and the disillusionment that comes to find out where you where God's people really are. Is a veil through which we must pass. Many of us are in the state of deception even tonight about the condition of the church and about our own condition, because we have never been tried, we have never been that excruciating and demanding place that reveals were in fact we are. In the three months that I was overseas and the little nucleus of the souls that are now with us up in that property in northern Minnesota whom we've known for years one family had been with us in the earlier Ben-Israel and are back again and another family have known that family for over years and they loved each other and would think nothing of traveling from Indiana to Dallas, Texas to spend Christmas together so much did they love each other until they had to live on the same property together. I came back just in time to avert a complete explosion with resentment and bitterness and vexation and accusations that was shocking and this precious woman said she was grey when I saw her. When I had left her, she had a real nice chewy charismatic confidence she was one of those stable and precious women she said "I've lost my glow". I said "praise the Lord". That glow would not have endured to the end. It was only kind of like the blush of the rose it will have served you charismatically, but it would never have sustained itself right through to the end and of necessity that thing had to go and you must now go through a period in which you are stripped even of that and to a terrible humiliating grayness to finally come progressively to the radiance of God that is the statement of his true sanctifying work. Because the communities of God's people are not just a physical provision to sustain our bodily lives it's a provision for sanctity as well as life. If it's not going to be on a farm this much is needed, we have got to come to something more than a succession of Sunday services and midweek Bible studies. We have got to welcome the intensification of our life together shared life together and I think when we'll do it spiritually and socially will find also that will be doing it economically and that this is not only an end time provision for our sustenance it's the very genius of God could make of our saints that will glorify him to the very end the age.

The Light of God in us

You know the heck of it is? That as your light shines in your more visibly radiant human right that very thing will invite an opposition against it, because darkness abhors the light, we make ourselves candidates for persecution martyrdom by coming in increasingly to the sanctifying light of God. So, if you want to play it safe to stay where you are. Now don't trouble the Lord for any deeper process of the refining of your life, but I'll tell you what you may find when the smoke clears you may yet could hook call yourself Christian but you'll be part of a great falling away that called the scribes as the necessary and critical factor before the end concludes.

The Mystery of Suffering

Well just as a final word, spot checking and jumping through this statement about the mystery of suffering that somehow purposes of God are served just as it was in Zimbabwe. Because of your reading revelation says that power was given to the beast to overcome the saints and yet in being overcome something is wrought something is exhibited that has to do with the very purposes for which God has created the church namely the demonstration of the manifold wisdom of God to the principalities and the palace of darkness. That wisdom was exhibited in the sufferings of Jesus on the cross that broke the power of those powers and will be concluded by our exhibiting his Christ's likeness in the extremity of our suffering as we

come to the conclusion of age and the fulfillment of the mystery of suffering. That deserves a whole message but just to say this if you have been spoiled by the prosperity message and that somehow if you're suffering, you're out of the faith. I pray God that we can spit out the rest of that and align ourselves with a truly prophetic and apostolic mentality that looks upon suffering is not some drug thing, but even as the early Anabaptist the very confirmation of God's call and a privilege. It gives us a crown and eternal reward which ought to be a conspicuous and conscious element in our present life is the anticipation of the heavenly reward or that which we will then doing the earth for his sake. And I feel so foolish saying that, just in this moment, I just feel like an anachronism, just to speak you the things that have always been the constituent elements of true faith seem so jarringly out of place in our age. That could speak about suffering, the eternal rewards, the martyrs crown it is odd. It ought not to be, is it something wrong with that vocabulary that it seems odd to speak it or is there something wrong with us that it has been so out of our consideration. That when it is sounded even it seems to a strange when it ought to be normative.

The message of Sanctification: Come out!

And the last word is this on the final couple of weeks of that overseas trip there was one message that God repeated night after night the message of sanctification especially in 2 Corinthians 6 "Get thee out, come out of her and touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you and be a father unto you and you shall be my sons in my daughter says the Lord God Almighty." Not I want to say saints that I was made very conscious in that same overseas trip that there's a dimension of the Knowledge of God palpable knowledge, I'm not talking about head trip that of a kind that sustains you in temptation and trial that was lacking in my own life and I believe is caught up in the final and the ultimate demonstration of God as Father and I think of my own prayer life I often pray to the Lord or I speak about God or the Lord or Jesus, but I really am have used the word "father".

I grew up without a father and the whole subject of fatherhood was a mystery to me when I think that beyond the biographical facts of my life. That the absence of the consciousness of God as father which is critical for the end times was because I was not radically separated from the things that God abhors. "Get thee out and touch not the unclean thing and I will it's a promise receive you and be a father unto you and you shall be my sons and my daughters says the Lord God Almighty."

I thought that's strange I'd never seen that before. Why did you say says the Lord? Why this additional signature the Lord God Almighty and just put the test this in your spirit. I think because there's a dimension of power that comes from God not power to serve but power to stand power to endure and comes with the knowledge of God as father that is available to those who will be sons and daughters who are radically separated from the world so much is not even to touch the unclean thing.

I just destroyed my American Express card after 20 years and you cannot believe how I have been the target of mailings from the American Express company as if I was the most exemplary customer that they have ever had appeal after appeal for a clock a calendar fountain pen if only I will re-establish my card with them. I'll tell you what it slept a little hole in my wallet and that was like a comforting presence to go overseas and not to know what's going to happen as what happened to us when Kenya Airlines was five hours late and we couldn't make the connecting flight at Nairobi that would have taken us from Cairo to Johannesburg and had to spend a night in Nairobi that we didn't plan.

That costs a hundred dollars for one night to get out of the airport five bucks each they get in the next day twenty bucks each would be departure tax. So much for the actually the cheapest hotel we could find

owned by a Jew to whom I left a copy of Ben Israel in the word, the cheapest one hundred bucks, but what if we didn't have it wouldn't be comforting that little plastic card to lay down wouldn't be convenient isn't it a security and I don't know that it's a particular requirement for me or for all of God's saints, but God is wanting Himself to be our confidence in our security even we got to stay all night in a hotel airport.

So, I've just asked you to begin the process of extrication they're coming out from a world a system predicated upon convenience and conflict and assurances that has not its foundation in God but in man. And to welcome the trials the dealings of God that will fit us to be an overcoming remnant people who have the testimony of Jesus and keep the commandments of God.

Closing Prayer

Let's bow out heads before the Lord, Whom Him is love is speaking these things at the inception of this decade that we might be sobered, alerted, have a sense of what this decade means and desire His preparation that we might stand in it. So Lord, I just thank you for tonight, I thank you my God that you've not allowed me to speak anything else since my return. Virtually every night and in every place in every statement in every city where You've brought me. This single message to warn, to alert, to prepare the people of God. Lord I ask Your blessing upon it that however sketchy and spotty this of necessity has been that Your saints will open themselves to the illumination of your Spirit. That they will read the events that take place in the world not to the perspective of Time or Newsweek but the Holy Ghost and particularly through the context of the apocalyptic scriptures that book of Revelation that warns us of the things that shall shortly come to pass. Have for Yourself a people for Your name in this locality who shall radiantly stand for you in a place of separation. Thank you my God. Thank you, my God may suffering not, seem to us a strange thing may we be willing to bear my God its requirement if you might be glorified thereby. Help us my God in our own homes with our own children our own families to establish your authority to resist the seductions and the blandishments of this age to recognize its power and this influence we bless Your name for the love my God that will not let us go and alerts us even now of those things which are.

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