

Some Comments on the Tragedy of September 11, 2001

by Art Katz

The sermon emphasizes the need for the church to speak courageously and prophetically in the face of tragedy, and to repent in order to escape the judgment that begins first in the House of the Lord.

Scripture: Hebrews 12:25

Topics: "God's Judgment", "Hope in Crisis"

Description

Art Katz reflects on the profound impact of the September 11 tragedy, emphasizing that the very foundations of security and trust in society have been irrevocably shaken. He challenges the church to confront the reality of God's judgment and the need for repentance in a world that has turned away from Him. Katz warns against complacency and urges believers to speak truthfully and compassionately to a grieving nation, recognizing the eternal implications of such calamities. He calls for a return to a biblical perspective that acknowledges God's sovereignty and the urgency of preparing for the coming of the Lord. Ultimately, he encourages the faithful to embrace grace and serve God with reverence amidst the chaos.

Transcript

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The Shaking of All Things That Can Be Shaken

There has been a great fall. More has come down than the great towers of the world's financial center; it is the world itself that can never again be the same. What security, confidence or trust can mankind be assured when even its impenetrable symbol of defense, the Pentagon, is itself penetrated? It is not that systems of security have momentarily failed and can henceforth be remedied and strengthened, but system itself; that is, what is wrought by man and constitutes the assured, assumed verities of life and safety--the taken-for-granted foundations of being itself--are themselves forever shaken! Henceforth, nothing can be assumed as sure; no institution of society, even government itself, inviolable. The rudiments of civilization, law order, justice are overnight, in a day, collapsed, rendered undone. Men,

moved by cold satanic calculation, without fear of imprisonment or even death, take with them unsuspecting innocent and defenseless thousands into sudden catastrophe. And this, stupifyingly, in the name of rectifying injustices or drawing attention to a wrong! Anything and everything goes when reverence and the respect for life have perished.

Has the church itself adequately understood and seriously considered the very scripture it quotes that in the last days, "all things that can be shaken will be shaken that only those things that can remain will remain"? What shall we say now to a shaken nation and world? Will we speak courageously and prophetically of the consequences of God-forsakenness to an ostensibly Judeo-Christian world? Or will we mumble platitudes that neither instruct nor console, but only vex and antagonize the troubled and the grieving? What if we have already too long made the faith itself a platitude, and have ourselves shared with the world the trust in its institutions, and indeed become one? Now our pretensions, piety and hype are revealed as fraudulent performance, for the sudden crisis, like all crisis, has found us out to reveal our inadequacy. Like all institutions we ourselves are shaken. Our truths, sufficiently satisfying to ourselves in an ordered and structured world, are in the debacle of the smoking ruins of the twin towers revealed as limp verbiage. We are afraid to even suggest to the nation that it might be prudent to inquire of God's judgment in the tragedy, or allow for the consideration of His sovereignty (by which, by definition, God is God) in the face of such devastation and ruin. It is only in the context of irremediable and eternal ruin that present judgments, however horrific, can be considered as merciful warnings of that which is irrevocable and abiding. The context of eternity, long ignored even by the church in the obsession for the temporal, needs again to be brought into view. Considering the idolatries of our present age, could it have been obtained in a lesser way? How great must be the ultimate and eternal judgment from which God would save men if tragedy of this kind be considered a preliminary!

Surely something ominous has been struck when the world's most vaunted epicenters of financial and military security are so nakedly and defenselessly exposed, and a handful of fanatical men can cripple and close down the mightiest of nations. No amount of repair or more vigorous security surveillance or prevention can avail. We cannot return to life as we have known it, trusted and hoped for. An Apocalypse has come--not into our theaters, but into the rudiments of life itself. Could this be the beginning anywhere and everywhere of that which the scriptures and the Lord Himself have long warned, but been long ignored: "men's hearts failing them for fear for the expectation of those things which shall come upon the earth" (Luke 21:26).

Let us awake out of the debris and dust of our own ineptitude. Let us call the world, not with harsh condemnation, but with a compassion that does not repulse but draws, to anticipate rather the Coming of the Lord and the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness! And to repent, for the Day of the Lord which is at hand--as being equally a hope and not a bludgeon--as ourselves deserving the judgment which begins first, if we do not judge ourselves, in the House of the Lord. God give us the grace, as Paul at Athens, grieving for the souls of men when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry, to bring the biblical perspective to bear uncompromisingly but tenderly to our assaulted nation.

See that you do not refuse Him who speaks [in calamity and judgment], for if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, how much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven whose voice then shook the earth; but now has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." Now this "Yet once more" indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, seeing we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we

may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:25-29).

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