

Articles and Sermons :: Katz, Israel and the Church 03

Katz, Israel and the Church 03 - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/10/1 8:51

An item not for intellectual combat and killing  
 An item to be digested unto life and holiness among Gentiles and Jews.  
 An item to be regarded as a heart cry on the Walls of Jerusalem, the heavenly and the earthly.  
 An item for the prayer chamber, to mobilize a heart when the many turn against the Jew.  
 Lars W.

The Mystery of Israel and the Church  
 Art Katz

Chapter 3 - Israel and the Election of God

From verse 6 of Romans chapter 9, Paul rolls up his sleeves and begins to dig into the great issues that are raised by Israel's rejection of her Messiah. The fact that Israel could reject her own promised Messiah and Deliverer according to her own scriptures has got to be one of the greatest anomalies and contradictions of the history of mankind. That God Himself foresaw, even ordained it, is staggering in its proportions. Even more significant is the question of God's apparent failure: How could God and His Word fail?

But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; neither are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "Through Isaac your descendants will be named." That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. For this is a word of promise: "At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son" (Rom. 9: 6-9).

The same apostolic man whose heart is grieved over Israel and its lost condition, and who wishes that he himself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of his Jewish kinsmen, is as grieved over the question of God's honor and the truth of His word. Paul's jealousy for the glory of God, His name, His honor and His faithfulness to His word makes him to grieve over the unsaved condition of his kinsmen; this is the apostolic heart. He is grieved that Israel's failure to recognize their Messiah would appear to be a demerit against God; and that the people who were appointed and called sons, and who were given the privileges of adoption, the covenants, the promises, the glory and the ministry of the Temple, are bringing, by their unbelief, a reproach against God and a blasphemy against His name.

But if God's word fails, then God is no longer God; for God is eminently the God of the word, the God of the word of the covenant, and the God of the word of promise. If He cannot keep the word that He Himself gave, then that is the end of God as God. This is the great enigma. How could God's word have failed? Can God fail? Can God's word fail? These are the great, theological problems that Paul had to answer for the Church in Rome and, by extension, all the churches in every generation. He is thrust, therefore, into an uncanny and precarious place, and has got to wrestle his way through.

Re: Katz, Israel and the Church 03 - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/10/1 12:56

The Israel of God

Paul begins to answer them by showing that the failure is not with God's word. God's word will succeed. The fact that the nation rejected the Messiah is not the statement of the failure of God's word. It shows, rather, that not all the nation was Israel. It is more than the issue of being naturally Israel and being descended from Abraham. Ishmael was also a son, but it does not make him the 'Israel of God.' As Paul says in verse 8, ...it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God (Rom. 9:8).

A Jew may be a physical descendant of Abraham, but that does not automatically make him a candidate for glory. The fact that Israel has rejected the Messiah shows that they were not among the elect; it was just as much a statement then as it is now. If a Jew or a Gentile is unregenerate, he is neither the child of promise, nor the descendant of Isaac. In his

letter to the Galatians, Paul uses the phrase 'the Israel of God' (Galatians 6:16) to indicate something beyond, or other than, just ethnic Jews.

Paul continues to probe deeper into an unfolding of the genius of God in all of this. What seems to be disappointment and failure on God's part is shown by Paul to be the revelation of God's glory. In the outworking of His whole redemptive purpose, there always seems to be two tracks, as has been suggested historically through the choosing of Jacob and the rejection of Esau, or the choosing of Isaac and the rejection of Ishmael. It is the true, the chosen and the called, as opposed to that which appears to be all the above, but is rejected of God. It is no coincidence that the thing rejected by God often seems to have all the right credentials. But from the beginning of His whole salvation history, God is showing that He will choose whom He will choose; it is not our democratic notions of what we think is fair. God's whole intention through Israel is to show mankind that He is God, sovereignly God!

Mankind is so stubborn and self-willed in his own categories that nothing less than what God will actually demonstrate at the end of the age, in the choosing and sifting of the Israel of God, will reveal how much God is God, even to the nominally Christian nations.

**Re: Katz, Israel and the Church 03 - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/10/2 2:01**

#### I AM WHO I AM

When Moses asked God to name Himself to the people of Israel, God replied, "I am who I am," and "...The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you." This is My name forever, and this is My memorial name to all generations (Exodus 3:14a, 15b).

'I am who I am' is also taken to mean, 'I will be who I will be,' which is to say, 'I will do what I will do' because 'I AM GOD.' In other words, "I am God, and I will choose what I will choose, and I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy. You don't think that Israel deserves it? That is all the more reason why I have chosen them. Your thinking shows the rottenness of your heart. It is a good thing you are not God, because it shows that your mercy would have been proportionate to those whom you think deserve it, especially yourself. But I will yet choose whom I will choose."

And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; for though the twins were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose according to His choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls (Rom. 9: 10-11).

This is a laser beam aimed at the heart of the whole mentality of the world and of human wisdom, both of which are contrary to God. The wisdom of the world is predicated upon works, merit and performance, and upon what we think we deserve because of what we do. In God's economy, everything is predicated on one principle only: "I am God, and I will choose what I will choose." That is the historical conflict. In his deepest heart, where man really lives his life, he wants a 'god' made in his image, which, in fact, makes him secretly 'God.'

Paul's statement here in Romans 9:11 contains the whole antagonism between the world and God as well as the whole antagonism between Judaism and Christianity. The whole issue of man versus God is summed up in that one statement in which God demonstrated throughout the history of Israel, and even in the sons of Rebekah, that He will choose whom He will choose. God does not give us mere abstract principles; they are exemplified and written in the flesh and blood of men. To turn our back, therefore, on the history of Israel, or to have a faith that has voided or lost its Hebraic content, is not to have the faith. Israel's history reveals God in His deepest principles and mind.

**Re: Katz, Israel and the Church 03 - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/10/2 7:37**

#### Not by Works

Two sons were born,

...in order that God's purpose according to His choice might stand, not because of works... (Rom. 9:11a).

In other words, the decision was made simply in their being birthed. They had not yet an opportunity to do anything that would influence God's choice, which in itself cuts right into the heart of a world that is totally predicated on doing. When the heavenly dove came down over Jesus in His baptism, the Father's voice was heard from heaven, "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22b). It is a remarkable statement made to a Son who had not yet done anything so as to please the Father. God is not pleased because we do something. If we are ever called to do anything, it will be out of a love that has been obtained on another basis, namely, our acceptance in the Beloved through the

Cross, the suffering and the death of His Son. We cannot obtain that relationship by doing, but having obtained it by grace, we had better do, because then the doing becomes the measure of our apprehension, as also of eternal reward. God is completely deaf to the principle of 'works' as the justification for a relationship with Himself.

If ever we could get the idea that we do not have to do or perform in order to obtain God's esteem and perfection, we would have the most liberating and freeing of truths. Only then could we truly serve God selflessly, with no holds barred, no strings attached. There would be nothing that we need or want in return, or things for which we would secretly hope. A relationship with God on the basis of works would be a symbiotic and self-loving relationship, motivated by self, and this is, for the most part, at the root of the Church's present attitude toward Israel. Any act of man will instantly be rendered as no longer priestly by the slightest unconscious twinge of motive for one's own interest, even those actions that are supposedly for the purposes of God. Only priestly acts bear the anointing of God for the purposes of God. To come to that place in one's life and ministry requires this extraordinary confidence that there is nothing we can do to obtain God's esteem. We are accepted in the Beloved, and therefore we can be freed from the depth of this most pervasive thing that runs through the whole tenor of modern civilization. The world is a works-oriented, performance-oriented civilization that predicates its rewards, its certificates, its 'Oscars,' and everything else on the basis of performance. It is a wisdom whereby men are compelled to do and to perform.

Oh, the hidden depths of what is in man! Who can know them? Who can know his own heart? Who can know the depths of his own sin? That is why it is the greatest grace of God to reveal our iniquity. And so, when the twins were born, and before they could do anything, a choice was expressed which was God's:

...in order that God's purpose according to His choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger" (Rom. 9:11b-12).

Not only is God repudiating conventional Jewish wisdom, but also His own ordinance, because in Hebraic life, the first-born is rightly the inheritor:

Just as it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! (Rom. 9:13-14).

God has a preference that is not affected by what either of these two men did. The choice was God's before they were capable of doing anything. How should we understand that? God has made a choice, but the choice is not predicated upon performance, which is the very basis upon how we esteem men. But God is not God on that basis. God has spoken, therefore, let every mouth be stopped. God has called. God has chosen. That is the issue.

And this is from the very inception of Israel's history and the bringing forth of a Jacob who, however intense he was in wanting the spiritual inheritance and blessing, could not obtain it by his natural birthright. He obtained it only by the forfeiture of his strength when he wrestled with the angel of God and was made lame. Only then did he become Israel. Only the lame find favor with God, not man in his works, nor man in his sap and in his humanity. God works through the weakness of men, indeed, His strength is made perfect in weakness. The great principles of the faith that are described in the New Testament are already explicated in the Old, for He is the same God. The issue of Israel, therefore, is the issue of God as nothing else is calculated to reveal Him. It is not because of Israel's qualification or their deserving, but because of God's choosing.

So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy (Rom. 9:16).

Man is so triumphant in his flesh and egoism that God, in wanting to make His point, has chosen to demonstrate Himself in His dealings with Israel, a people who exemplify man in the flesh. Jacob is the quintessence of the man of flesh, even in his spiritual aspiration, and therefore he requires the most strenuous dealing in order that, at the end of the age and for all eternity, all creation will know that God is God. Israel is chosen to reveal Him as His witness people, not in their success, but eminently in their failure.

That lesson is so eternally necessary for all mankind that God does not think it too elaborate to use Israel as an illustration throughout her whole painful history. She will be saved by the mercy of God through a Church who themselves have been dealt with by God. It is only by Israel's shameful rejection of her Messiah that the questions revealing the deeper mystery are opened, and that is true for all of us. It is in the failure, the disappointment and the thing that defies what we had hoped for, even spiritually, that the greater thing is opened.

Re: Katz, Israel and the Church 03 - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/10/2 14:35

#### The Judgment and Mercy of God

Paul is negotiating through very difficult statements, but that is his great task. His reasoning, interpretation and use of Old Testament scriptures sometimes seems arbitrary, or he will quote the Old Testament from the Septuagint, the Greek rendering, which often 'seems' not even quite accurate, but he will bend it to make a point that he is seeking with complete confidence that this is God's perspective. He is handling extraordinary concepts that have to do with God's judgment and His mercy that, on the face of it, seem to present an image of God as being ruthless. It would appear that God created a certain people as vessels for destruction and others for mercy in order that His glory might be revealed. What kind of a God is it who makes men His device to reveal what He wants to reveal about Himself in a seemingly cruel manner? How do we reconcile that with a God whom we know is 'just and righteous altogether'?

God is mercy, and He manifests what and who He is in His acts. God does what He is. That is not always true for us! We can put on a nice face and be cordial and polite while all the time our hearts are set on something else. But God is One, &#61472;inseparable and indivisible, much the same as the seamless garment that Jesus wore. He is one through and through. He is mercy, and we know it because He demonstrates it, and that is how we know what He is in Himself. When the Church is like that, we will have 'arrived.' When the world sees what we as the Church do and are, and that those are one and the same because there is no disparity or contradiction between our words, our conduct and our character, then we will have come to the place that God is after.

Re: Katz, Israel and the Church 03 - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/10/3 1:15

#### The Name of God

For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth." (Rom. 9:17).

This is more than a mere vocalization. Jesus said in John 17, "I have revealed Your name." It is a form of language unique to the scriptures, but it is getting at something that we, as modern people, have lost sight of. God is jealous for His name. A name is indicative of the character of the one who bears it. To proclaim His name, therefore, is to let the earth and the nations know who God, in fact, is. His name is in keeping with what He is in Himself. Jesus was saying, "I have set You forth as God. I am showing people who and what the Father is by the way in which I have deported Myself." We read that God raised Pharaoh up that He might bring him down. The judgments on Egypt were horrendous. God displayed His power to deliver His people from a Pharaoh king that would not let them go, "that he might serve Me" (Exodus 4:23b). To serve God is to proclaim His name throughout the earth.

So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? (Rom. 9:18-20a).

Paul construes raising a question about God as being the same as answering back to God. Do we realize how often our raising a question to God is a form of rebellion rather than a request for information? We are really provoking God, if not mocking Him. What we are saying is that His way does not make sense to us. The greatest surrender and submission to God is to not raise the question at all, but to simply submit to the truth of God as it pleases Him to express it. In this instance, to raise a question is itself a statement of rebellion, where no question ought to have been raised at all, because God is God and "Who are you, O man?"

These questions are implying that no one has a legitimate argument with God. After all, He has got the power, and though we do not agree and do not really like what He chooses and what He has mercy on, who has an argument with Him? It is striking a note of contempt and saying, "If I could, I would really take issue, but since He is God and I cannot really battle with Him, I will just surrender." But it is surrender with clenched teeth, a begrudging condescension, and not the surrender of a sweet-spirited yielding before a God who alone is right.

The Holy Spirit is giving Paul the quintessence of man in his naked rebellion against God, summed up in the terseness of this question, "Who is He then that we should argue against Him?" In an imagined statement it bespeaks the condition of man, not only in the time of Paul, but for all generations.

Who are you, O man, who answers back to God? (Rom. 9:20a).

What an affront! It is a remarkable impertinence to answer back to God.

The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? (Rom. 9:20b).

Yes, it will, if it is yet carnal!

Or does not the potter have the right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use? (Rom. 9:21).

If the potter makes something from the clay, but it does not come out right, then he is free to smash it and to rework it. It is his prerogative, and we do not argue with a potter. Just to be, and not to be productive, is a great stigma of shame in our performance and production-oriented world. It is because we are unwilling to bear that shame that we, as the clay, take ourselves off the shelf and do our own thing. We end up forming our own image of God and performing our own functions instead of bearing the suffering of waiting.

**Re: Katz, Israel and the Church 03 - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/10/3 12:50**

#### The Revelation of God's Glory

What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory (Rom. 9:22-23).

What do you think of a God who, in order to make His power and glory known, will demonstrate something through wrath and judgment? What if God is that God, then what? Is He still your God? What if God would go so far as to employ wrath and judgment to make His power, His name and His glory known? Paul raises this very question. What if He is not the God you would like Him to be, and He would go so far as to employ wrath to bring His purposes to pass? We are not playing with a little, chintzy word here. Biblical wrath or the judgment of God is devastating, and what if He will go so far as to employ it to make His power known, since that is the revelation of His glory? Paul's question is a weighted and calculated offense against our religious sensibilities with regard to how we would like God to be and to be known.

If we have a problem with the wrath of God, we need to see it as it was demonstrated at the Cross. The Cross is the final statement of God in His wrath, and the ultimate contradiction of all religious categories. The wrath of God for the sins of mankind was visited upon Jesus in utter devastation, so much so, that He could hardly be recognized as a man. When you see that 16th century, glorious Holy Spirit masterpiece, The Isenheim Altarpiece, painted by Grunewald, you would think you were looking at an animal more than a man. The figure of Christ looks so deranged; the body is so elongated, so grotesque and broken that you wonder whether it is a man or some groveling beast. Will God go that far? What if God, in order to show His glory, will manifest His wrath and His judgment? What if it is the only way and the most profound way that God reveals His glory, will you surrender to that? The fact that Israel could not surrender to that revelation has left them without God for two thousand years and more, because they could not buy the fact that that wretched piece of humanity was the Son of God, suffering the judgment of God as God. The greatest revelation of God, however, is precisely where we least expect it to be, and it comes in the manner in which we least think it will come. It is God's calculated stroke against man's religious imaginings, daring to make God in his own image. God calls it idolatry, and the end of it is death. It is the most deplorable of sins, and in order to break into that, God has got, for our sake, to reveal Himself through wrath.

Israel is going to be brought into this final revelation of God, whom they have forsaken and rejected for millennia, through their own Last Days' judgment. God's wrath is the ultimate statement of His love and mercy. The greatest love toward God is to love Him in His judgments and, moreover, to love His judgments. It is not a mere tolerating or bearing of them like castor oil that somehow must be swallowed down. The most distasteful and most painful thing, and the thing most calculated against our own religiosity is the most precious and deepest revelation of God. We should not despise the chastening of the Lord, but rather esteem it. It is only out of the fires of judgment that we will recognize the goodness of God in the severity.

**Re: Katz, Israel and the Church 03 - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/10/4 2:33**

...He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom He called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles (Rom. 9:23-24).

To miss the words 'for glory' is to miss everything, because it shows that He is not just arbitrarily doing these things in order to announce the fact that He is God. The ultimate issue is the issue of His glory. He is not an egoistic who needs to be glorified, but the truth is rather that mankind is the beneficiary of a God who is glorified. The world is dying for the lack of the visible demonstration of God's glory. Drug addiction, sexual molestation and every corrupt thing that mankind



God is doing have their origin in the vacuum of the absence of God's visible glory. He is not just a God jealous over His own delight in His glory, but He recognizes that it is an ultimately redemptive thing, even for all of His creation.

It is no accident that in the messianic and millennial era, the glory of the Lord, the true knowledge of Him, will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9b). And there is nothing that will bring the revelation of that glory better than a wrath and judgment that precedes this mercy. It is a judgment that we will find, in every case, totally deserved. The retribution of God against Israel is not an arbitrary matter, but will be in exact proportion to Israel's sins, whose sins are mounting every day.

God's mercy is His glory, but it is a mercy that cannot be revealed except it first be preceded by judgment. Only then does it become mercy. As we will see, the last acts against the present political state of Israel will be violent; but what concludes it is the totally undeserved mercy that will bring them back from the places to which they will have been brought as captive. In the absence of any hope in themselves, God Himself supernaturally and powerfully restores a surviving remnant of Israel in His mercy. The brokenness and repentance that will follow has no basis for description or comparison. The depth of their coming down before God at the revelation of that kindness, out of hopeless despair, will result in a new name for them. They will become His ministers and be honored above every nation on the earth. They will no longer remember fear and terror or any such thing, for God will wipe away every tear.

**Re: Katz, Israel and the Church 03 - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/10/4 5:57**

#### God's Choice

God is inextricably drawn into the life of the nation, Israel. But what was His whole purpose in choosing Israel? What are they chosen for? Why should He be required to choose at all? Why did He not just somehow demonstrate His salvational principles and make them available on an equal basis to whomsoever will among all the nations? Why was He required, by the very necessity of the thing, to choose a nation and set that nation before all other nations? Even Israel, who is the chosen nation, does not understand it, and is offended by their being that choice. They would rather be just like everybody else, but God's love for mankind will not allow them that condescension.

Israel was chosen to be God's witness nation because God is faced with the problem of communicating heavenly reality and truth to people on the earth, and it cannot be communicated as abstract principle. It has got to be made incarnate, embodied and exemplified by the acts of a people relating to the truth and reality of God. That should not be so foreign an idea to us as believers because we also are called to be witnesses unto Him, to show forth His, rather than our own virtue. How a person or nation acts in response to God and His requirements, and how God deals with them, is the revelation of God, both in judgment and in mercy. That is why there are some vessels fitted for wrath and some for mercy, but in Israel's case, they are fitted for both, though they do not seem to understand or be aware of it.

Even Isaiah chapter 53 is interpreted traditionally by Jews in saying that the Suffering Servant is not Jesus, but the nation, Israel. In fact, it may well be that one of the principal ways in which Israel will finally surrender to the truth of God about the character of their Messiah King, in His humility and willingness to suffer humiliation, is to experience it themselves.

Out of their experience, they will catch a glimpse of the Suffering Servant, the Lord Himself, and catch the revelation of what they failed to recognize two thousand years ago. They did not recognize God then, because a Suffering Messiah was not part of their religious concept of who God is, and yet God chose to reveal Himself in the witness of this very same Servant.

At this present time, in the dispensation of the Gentiles, it is the Gentile Church that is called to reveal the Lord, because what is the Church but the Body of the Head? It was a Gentile, Simon from Cyrene, of low public esteem, who bore the Cross. This is very appropriate because the Church, also, is called to be a lowly entity, an object of derision and contempt in the world in every generation, especially in the time of Israel's soon-coming suffering. That is why a Church that is full of swagger and believes they 'have it all together' nullifies and disqualifies itself as being the witness of the Lord to Israel in the Last Days.