

**Articles and Sermons :: Katz, Israel and the Church 08**

Katz, Israel and the Church 08 - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/10/31 6:46

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.

Chapter 8 - Israel And The Church

This cosmic drama is the setting for the Church of the Last Days. The Powers of darkness will not regard as a serious threat a local church that does not see this cosmic setting. They are the masters of deception, having a faculty for recognizing the authentic. They tremble and fear wherever they see apostolic authenticity in God's people. Wherever they see a congregation of the casual, and a conglomerate of individual entities going about their own business and their own self-will, whose government is not upon His shoulder, who do not take His Word seriously, who do not see themselves as participants in the eschatological future and are just wanting to 'get by' in a mere succession of services, these same Powers yawn and are unmoved.

Israel is God's designated test for the Church, to reveal its authenticity and the degree of the truth of its sanctification. Historically, many great saints have failed that test. Luther, the giant of the Reformation, most grievously collapsed at this test. He spent some time with three prominent Rabbis thinking naively that he would persuade them about the truths of the Reformation, and that they would recognize in the Reformation Church the revelation of the messianic faith of the God of Israel, but those Rabbis refused to be persuaded. Jews were no more impressed with Reformed Protestantism than they were with Catholicism. Jewish refutation of Luther's biblical arguments for Jesus as the Messiah, according to the fulfillment of Scripture, were, to Luther, of such a horrendous kind that they bordered on blasphemy. And, by that, Luther saw that the very presence of a Jewish or a Judaistic-rejecting body in Reformed Europe constituted a threat to the early Reformation itself. He then lapsed into a vitriolic opposition in which he produced a book called, *The Lies of the Jews*, which fueled, in part, the Nazi German persecution of Jews four centuries later! The Jew has ever and always been the severest test for the Church. They have always been a goad and thorn in its side because there is something about Jews in their mocking, skeptical attitude that is so galling and intimidating, especially to a self-congratulating, triumphalistic Church.

Re: Katz, Israel and the Church 08 - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/10/31 15:06

Moving the Jew to Jealousy

Where Paul says that "...salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous" (Rom. 11:11), we need to know, as the Church, that there is something that will be required of us because of Israel's fall. From God's side, a principal purpose for our salvation is to move Jews to jealousy, and if we are not occupied with His purpose for our salvation, then we are not apostolic; we cannot say that we are authentically under His Lordship. We can have our services, our outreaches, our programs and we can bless the people, and the Lord permits us, but we should not, by that, automatically assume that we will have any part with Him in the things that pertain to His eternal purposes.

If the predominantly Gentile Church only knew that God has brought them into something exclusively reserved at first for Israel, they would have a very different attitude about what it means to be a believer. It would give the Church a certain kind of chastening and humility to see that the graciousness of God has now been made available to the Gentiles also.

There is, however, a reason for that:

I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous (Rom. 11:11).

There is a strategy to God's bringing the Gentiles in. We Jews were broken off from our own root because of our rebell

ion and disobedience, and you as Gentiles were grafted in, not just to enjoy services, but to come to such a place of faith that you would exhibit what should have been our blessedness. You are in covenant relationship with our God and are grafted into His root, and therefore the sap of God should be coursing through you and exhibiting its fruits and blessings. This should be something so observable in Gentiles that it would alert unbelieving Jews to an awareness of their own God, in such a way as to move them to jealousy.

The first and foremost thing that distinguishes true church from any other religious body is not its preoccupation with the needs and benefits of its congregations, but its preoccupation with God's benefits. Making a demonstration to the Principalities and Powers of the air of the manifold wisdom of God is not for our benefit, but for His. The single defect at the heart of the Church today that threatens it from being the Church in the apostolic sense is that it has not taken to itself as foremost, God's purposes and God's satisfaction. The Church is still centered in itself: "Our blessing. Our benefit. What accrues to us by believing. We are saved from tribulation. We are going to heaven. Was the service good? How did you like the preaching? What did you get out of it?" Everything is predicated on us, our likes, and our satisfactions. We have brought into the Church the egocentrism that occupied us in the world, and which now have another face: religious or spiritual, but equally egocentric. Can you see that even unconsciously and inadvertently we are deeply self-centered, and that the very air that we breathe, the self-centered wisdom of the world, has permeated even the Church? Every question, in the last analysis, is seemingly predicated on what benefit we receive. We need something to break the power of that inescapable and intrinsic orbit, and God, for that reason, has given us a mandate and a call for something beyond ourselves, namely, that a primary purpose for our being and salvation, from God's perspective, is that, as Gentiles, we might "move Israel to jealousy."

As we have said, the key to Israel is the Gentile Church. And the key to the Church is this dynamic of obligation that it would never have chosen for itself, yet that obligation is calculated to save the Church from its inveterate religious self-centeredness and spiritual egocentricity that has been the ruin of its apostolic character. In other words, were it not for that obligation, we would be inextricably and unavoidably self-centered.

Even the consciousness of this requirement is presently absent from the Church's consideration. What kind of demonstration can the Church make that will provoke Jews, who have been the historical enemies of the gospel, to the jealousy of the thing that they have despised and resisted till now? Do we have to become more charismatic or pentecostal? What does "true church" mean? What must Jews see? What will do it? The remarkable thing is that Paul lets that statement stand: "...salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous (Rom.11:11). He gives no explanation as to what he means, or how it is to be performed. But this much we do know, the Church that can move Israel to jealousy is the same Church that can defeat the Powers of the air. Whatever is required for the one, serves also for the other. We know that there are two mysteries to be fulfilled. One is the mystery of Israel and the other is the eternal purpose of God, through the Church, of manifesting the manifold wisdom of God to the Principalities and Powers of the air (Eph. 3:10). These are two mysteries that are waiting to be fulfilled for which purpose God has "created all things." Ought that not to concern us?

Re: Katz, Israel and the Church 08 - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/11/1 4:27

Back to Beginnings

These things that we are groping for and touching cannot be obtained by only meeting on Sunday mornings with an occasional mid-week Bible study. It is clear that requirements of this kind demand a totality toward God and with those to whom we are joined. Sunday church is a convenience, but what I am suggesting is profoundly inconvenient. This is the going from house to house once again, breaking bread daily. This is working through issues, tensions, difficulties and misunderstandings, and it is amazing how easily they pop up and how quickly they can bring to nothing a relationship that has been years in the making. It requires and compels us to a daily vigilance and dependency upon God.

We cannot, from our own humanity, produce the unmistakable sincerity and authenticity that is required of us. We cannot stamp it out on the production line. We do not get it by going to a three-month discipleship school. It is, rather, a labor of love, of sacrifice and of suffering under the hand of God, and one will only get it in a prolonged period of time in a fellowship that is itself a place of suffering. Church is a suffering before it is a glory. The suffering we speak of is not from an attack that comes from without, but that which comes from within, in the misunderstandings, confusions and accusations. It is an astonishment the way people can sometimes be pressed because of the intensity of issues that arise! How could they say such things to you? Often there can be no explaining and no arbitrating; rather it is just something that needs to be borne. We have to bear each other up in our different places of maturity, self-control and understanding.

Wherever church endeavors to be true, wherever it seeks for the intensity of true relationships, face-to-face living, speaking the truth in love, correcting, reproofing and exhorting one another, then there is, of necessity, likely going to be much misunderstanding amongst ourselves. We are going to have to face tensions. Tensions can so deepen that you think, "This is it. This fellowship is finished. There is no way that there could be understanding and reconciliation here." We find ourselves utterly cast upon God and His mercy. A warp comes when the Powers of darkness find opportunity to insinuate themselves in our own subjective awkwardness and inability. It is difficult to hear one another objectively. We meant one thing, but it was heard in another way. To untangle that, and to come finally to an understanding and an agreement requires a tolerance and a patience beyond one's capability. The time it takes, the anguish of it all, is a suffering. But we will not be able to move Israel to jealousy until we have broken through and beyond our own natural ability to be patient and into the divine patience that is of God.

It is easier to send monthly contribution to Jewish evangelism organizations and let them do the work of evangelism, than for the Church in every locality to take up this mandate and obligation to the Jews of its own area. This is also God's criterion of success as church; it is not whether we are pleased with the services or what we enjoy, but that whatever has been established and created is able to touch resistant Jews as well, at the same time, manifest the manifold wisdom of God to the Principalities and Powers of the air. That is why Paul cried, "Who is sufficient for these things?" We need to know our inadequacy and insufficiency, and it ought to compel us to God. It forces us to the issue of the love of God, which is no abstraction, but which grows out of the gratitude for His faithfulness, especially when we have cast ourselves upon Him again and again in crisis situations that we could never have met on the basis of our own ability or wisdom. If it were not for the issue of the Jew, we would never have had the urgency to come into this mode of being. We, as the Church, would have satisfied ourselves with something much less than that which would have glorified God, because the Church that can move Jews to jealousy is the Church that will be unto Him a glory. We would not have known that glory if we had not had this mandate of requirement toward the Jew.

Re: Katz, Israel and the Church 08 - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/11/1 11:46

For Your Sake

There is not one fellowship in a thousand that has so much as considered the fact that the criterion of its success is not what it enjoys, but its ability to move the Jews of their locality to jealousy. That criterion is hardly ever considered because we instinctively know that it is an ultimate requirement. Jews are the enemies of the gospel. It is not just that they resist the gospel or are indifferent to it, they actively oppose it. Yet Paul says that they are the enemies of the gospel, and then he tacks on, "for your sake" (Rom. 11:28a). Can you understand why this page has been ripped out of the Bible in modern times? It is as if the Church and its teachers have passed over and omitted it because it is radical in its requirement, and both Jew and Gentile have suffered immeasurably for that omission.

What does Paul mean, "for your sake"? Do we need enemies, particularly enemies like that? We are not talking about a bunch of harmless amateurs. Jews are a characteristically powerful people; they are brilliant; they are intellectual; they are authoritative. Have you ever had a confrontation with a Rabbi, or a Jewish intellectual or radical? As a former missionary to the Jews, and having been one myself for a long time, there is no more formidable 'enemy of the gospel' than the Jewish people. For the most part, we have never faced them nose-to-nose. We have never allowed ourselves to venture into a situation where we would have a door slammed in our face. We have never experienced bristling Jewish anger and indignation. We have never been cut to shreds by the cruelest words that insulted and offended human ingenuity can express! They can make you to feel like a fool, "How dare you present this message to us; we who have been on the receiving end of two thousand years of 'Christian' persecution culminating in the Holocaust! Are you going to tell us that we need your Christ?" You do not know what confrontation is until you meet such a people head-on. All of a sudden you feel like a weak little nothing; your gospel seems now so utterly vain, futile and foolish; you just want to shrivel up and blow away!

Our God is not taken by surprise by these factors, for He knows them well. In fact, He has overseen the factors that would make the Jew, especially in the Last Days, the most conspicuous and powerful opposition to Jesus Christ. That is why Paul says,

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Rom. 1:16).

If only we could try the gospel out on the Greeks first, and if it is successful there, then we will try it on the Jew, because they are the toughest! But no, in the wisdom of God, it is, "To the Jew first." We are not to begin where it is easiest, but where it is hardest. "Go into all the world, but begin at Jerusalem where I was crucified and where the prophets were

e stoned to death. Then you can go on to Samaria and all these other places, but begin with the Jew first (Acts 1:8 paraphrased)“

We signal something to the Principalities and Powers of the air when we do not take this mandate seriously. They look down and say, “You guys do not take the Lord seriously. You have not obeyed His word of command to go into all the world and to preach this gospel to every creature, beginning in Jerusalem and to the Jew first. We regard you, therefore, as lightly as you regard Him. You have not acknowledged the Lordship of His Word. You have not acknowledged the divine priority that He has given the Church towards Israel. You have done your own thing, and have nicely circumvented the most difficult requirement of all. You are cowards, afraid, and have no confidence in your own spirituality. You have taken the easy way. You have allowed the Jews to have their own existence, because their synagogues are to be found in the same communities with your churches, which is the statement that you accord to the synagogue a comparable validity of an equal kind with Christianity as being tenable, authoritative and valid.”

To authenticate Judaism by honoring and respecting the synagogue and having dialogues with them, as if they constitute an equally redemptive faith, would have made Paul grieve. How could he have done that and still begin Romans chapter 9 by saying,

For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh (v. 3).

If a Christ-less Judaism were valid, why then would he have wished himself accursed?

If there is anything that makes the Church conscious of its inadequacy, it is confronting the Jew. The Jew is symbolic of the world, and the world at its most prestigious and powerful. Jews have won more Nobel prizes, more distinctions and awards in the fields of medicine, literature, culture and science, out of all proportion to their smaller number in population than any other people. They are a gifted people, but they employ their gifts, independent of God rather than for God, in the spirit of the world, and that makes them powerfully intimidating.

When God says, “To the Jew first,” He knows what He is talking about. When you touch Jewish life you are touching a whole world system, a whole humanism and a whole elaborate, moral, ethical, religious and secular system that is opposed to God in every point and particular. Although it is a false light, Judaism would be worth subscribing to from a humanistic viewpoint; it has the most formidable endowments of wisdom and reason. But when God and His Christ are factored in as Living Reality, it makes that very same body of humanism inhumane in defrauding Israel and the nations of both reality and eternity.

Re: Katz, Israel and the Church 08 - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/11/1 14:39

The Fulness of the Gentiles

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel, until... (Rom. 11:25a).

Put a circle around the word until. There is a condition, and here is the point. It is a condition that only the Church can meet. The issue of Israel becomes the issue of the Church.

...until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in (Rom. 11:25b).

When God says “fulness,” He means the completion of all that He has intended. There is a fulness for which God waits, the “calling out of a people for His name, from among every nation” (Acts 15:14). This has always been the mission mandate of the Church. But according to Paul’s letter to the Romans, the greatest incentive that God gives the Church to go into all the world and proclaim the gospel is that,

...the Deliverer will come from Zion (Rom. 11:26a).

When that mission is completed, something will happen independent of Israel’s own spiritual condition. The Deliverer is released in the moment that the fulness of the Gentiles has come in. Israel is delivered, and the Deliverer takes His throne on the holy hill of Zion and rules over the nations. The world is in a hapless condition until the Lord Himself comes.

Only thereafter can there be a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness.

It is clear that this view opposes the “pre-tribulation” rapture mentality, a mentality that sees the Church as being removed before the tribulation. It is a widely accepted doctrine, but to challenge it is to be looked upon as challenging some sacred foundational doctrine of the faith. It is as if you are introducing heresy, when it is not a doctrine of the historic faith at all. Nothing, in our opinion, has more disarmed the Church of the necessity for preparation, discipleship, maturity and of being the Church that can stand in the Last Days and overcome tribulation, than the misguided confidence that it will not have to face it!

It is because of this “pre-tribulation” rapture expectation that the Church, for the most part, is presently operating now toward Israel from the place of guilt, namely, that the Church is removed while the Jews remain to face the music. Anythi

ng that issues from the Church that has an ulterior motive, that relieves our conscience, where we operate out of guilt rather than from a priestly place, is not a an effectual place of ministry. Only priestly ministry is valid. The heart of priestly ministry is that the priest derives no advantage or benefit for himself in his priestly ministrations. However, if you are operating out of guilt and a bad conscience, then you are alleviating something for yourself by being condescending to Jews.

If we, as the Church, elevate and exalt ourselves as something separate, independent or superior to the Jew, then, by that one thing, we are no longer the Church. The Church loses its character when it loses its essential humility. The Church needs to be reminded that we were grafted into their root and that we are made, by the gospel, partakers with them. The Church is not some phenomenon independent of Israel; it is the graciousness of God to allow Gentiles to come into their promise, into their hope and into their expectation, which they themselves have lost by default and no longer know. Part of our task is to remind Israel, not only verbally, but by being a demonstration of what it means to have been invited into the privileges of their 'commonwealth' (Eph. 2:12).

Moving the Jew to jealousy is a truer measure by which we should be assessing our spiritual condition. The very nature of the present Church is to be satisfied in itself. It gauges itself by itself or by others, and is happy with the measure of things that God gives, which defeats the very purpose for them being given. God calls us to ultimacy and to a purpose beyond ourselves that cannot be measured by ourselves, but only by our ability to move Jews to jealousy by the corporate word that we speak and incorporate as 'life together.' It can only happen with a people who have come to one mind, one heart, one understanding and one speaking. This is not an invitation to become automatons processed off the assembly line and who come in some monotonous submission to speak the same thing. It means a people, richly individualistic, formidable in themselves, alive to having the possibility of their own opinions and views but now brought by the divine process of God, which necessitates suffering through trial, to being in a complete agreement with God. And when He requires it, we can then speak a word that alone is creative and life-giving, because it is a word given in agreement with God.

Unless we are in preparation now toward that end, we need not think that it can be summoned from us when the drama of the Last Days shall come upon us suddenly. Will we have an incentive for this quality of integration, unity of life and agreement, and the depths of it? By what means shall we attain that end? One of the principal ways that a work of that depth has the greatest potential is in community, the daily life with the saints, who have taken up, consciously and willingly, their apostolic task!