

There Is Salvation in No One Else

by John Piper

The supremacy of Jesus is the only loving claim that can be spoken in a pluralistic world, and it is the cause of all Christian martyrdom.

Duration: 32:02

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Acts 3:6-8, Acts 3:15, Acts 3:20-21

Topics: "Book Of Acts"

Description

In this sermon, Pastor John Piper discusses the current state of the world, highlighting the radical pluralism and contradictory claims that exist in society. He emphasizes that we live in a world where Christianity and other traditional views are being pushed to the sidelines, as secularism becomes the new consensus. Piper warns that as believers, we must bear witness to the uniqueness and supremacy of Jesus Christ, even though it may become increasingly difficult and unsafe. He concludes by expressing gratitude that he did not have to change the text for today or next Sunday, indicating that he will be preaching on the topic of abortion.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from *Desiring God* is available at www.DesiringGod.org The Star Tribune reported on Friday that a perceptible change had taken place in the image of Saddam Hussein from a secular strategist to a Muslim zealot. In these words, with the outbreak of war, some sense an almost messianic tone, particularly in his speech Thursday after the first wave of Allied bombing raids, using images of President Bush as Satan and courageous Iraqis as descendants of prophets and believers.

Now what that does is make crystal clear for us that we live in a world of radical pluralism, in which radically contradictory claims are being made on our lives. It's a global village, you can follow the war moment by moment halfway around the world. So, is President Bush Satan? Are zealous patriotic Muslim Iraqis true sons of the prophets and true believers? Which is another way of asking, is Allah the one true God and is Mohammed his prophet? Which is another way of asking, is Islam a pathway to God or the pathway to God? Now I want to be real clear at the beginning and I'll say this again at the end, that in what I'm saying here I'm not implying or saying that the war is a conflict between Christianity and Islam.

I don't believe that it is because I don't believe America is a Christian nation. One of the glories of our faith is that it has no national identity, it has no geographic center, it has no national shrine. Christians, if they

are real Christians, are aliens and exiles in every country and are out of step with every human authority and every human institution even when we submit to them.

Is that clear? America is not a Christian nation and Christians cannot be identified with any national or ethnic group. We are aliens and exiles upon the earth. Out of step with every government and every human way of thinking.

But there is a powerful religious impulse to this conflict. President Bush did call Billy Gray. Hussein did kneel on his carpet.

And he does want to cast the war in terms of a holy war. But all of that points to this crucial fact. We live in a world that is radically pluralistic with radically contradictory claims being made upon our lives for our allegiance.

Nationally and it is happening more and more and more at home. You know the consensus that once existed in this land. You could call it Judeo-Christian or you could call it Protestant.

There was once a consensus that enabled the social structures of our land to proceed upon a fairly coherent set of moral expectations. And it is disappearing very rapidly if it is not gone almost entirely. Now in the place of that coherent sort of broadly Judeo-Christian ethic.

There is coming not an open and mutually respecting pluralism where all views are equally approved or equally heard. That is not the alternative that is emerging upon the scene of American culture. Rather what is emerging in the name of pluralism is a secular orthodoxy.

And that orthodoxy is being used to judge the parameters of the pluralism. And the old views are not respected. They are intensely disapproved of and hostilely treated and forced to the margin of our corporate and public discourse.

That is the reality in America today. And therefore not only does the war highlight the radical pluralism and contradictory claims upon the lives of human beings in the world today. But American civilization does as well.

The old consensus is gone. The new consensus is emerging as a secular one. Christianity and all of the old views are being pushed to the perimeter and are becoming increasingly offensive because of their moral claim on the emptiness of relativism.

That is the world in which we live. That is the world in which you and these little ones that we just dedicated are going to increasingly have to bear witness to the uniqueness and the supremacy of Jesus Christ, Lord of the Universe. And it's not going to get easier or safer.

Now the text, remarkably, and I praise God for it, in my trek through Acts, I have not had to change the text for today or for next Sunday on abortion. Let me bring you up to date. It's been some time since we've been in Acts.

Here's where we are. Chapter three, Peter and John going up to the temple. Jesus Christ, the living Lord, heals a man through them who was lame from birth.

He leaps and runs through the temple. A great crowd gathers and Peter has a great opportunity to preach the gospel. And he preaches and he moves from the local and the particular to the global and the

universal with words like he, this Jesus who just healed this man, is the author of life.

This Jesus who just healed this man is the fulfillment of fifteen hundred year old prophecy. This Jesus is the one who in heaven now waits and will come again and restore all things to paradise. This Jesus will bless all the families of the earth including Iraqi families and Saudi families and Russian families and American families.

The Jesus who just raised this man from the dead is Lord of all and maker of all. That's the way this Peter in this out of the way land called Palestine over this one little event preached. He moved from the local to the global and then he got arrested.

Chapter four verse one. He got arrested and he got put in jail overnight and then he is brought before the rulers and verse seven tells us how it goes now. By what power and by what name did you do this? Meaning heal this man.

And now watch again how Peter moves from the local and the specific and the particular to the global and the universal. Verse ten. Be it known to you all, Peter says, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well.

Now do you see the movement there? Now can anything good come out of Nazareth? Remember those words? Can anything good come out of Nazareth? No, it's a no count Galilean village where nobody who's anybody came from. And not only that, he is less than a nobody. He was crucified by you people.

He says, and only miserable, no good criminals get crucified on the killing hill of Golgotha outside Jerusalem. So he's real specific. He's real nobody.

He's real low. And God raised him from the dead. And he's the Lord of the universe and just healed this man.

A shock effect. Peter's doing that intentionally. To move from the particular, which is so offensive in the world, so offensive, that our Savior has to be a Jew.

What if you don't like Jews? What if you don't like Galilee of the nations? What if no good can come out of Nazareth? Well, Peter is saying, that's it. That's reality. That's God's choice to humble us and get us off of our proud ethnocentrism.

And then, he takes up a picture and says the same thing again. Verse 11. A picture taken from Psalm 118.

This is the stone, which was rejected by you builders, but which has become the head of the corner. So now we get the picture. The kingdom is pictured like a building.

And stones are people who might have some significant or more or less insignificant place in the building. A brick in the wall maybe. And the stone from Nazareth is examined by the builders, the Jewish leaders, and he is rejected.

It's not a good brick. And they throw it out on the killing hill of Golgotha and it gets buried in a tomb. And the architect comes forth from his heaven and sees the brick, his brick, insignificant, thrown out, rejected by men, buried.

And he picks him up, cleans him off, and puts him as the head of the corner of the kingdom. Same move from the local, the particular, the specific, the out of the way, the rejected, the no good, no count, to the Lord of the universe. Oh, how offensive this is in our world.

And then he draws out an awesome implication in verse 12 and says it flat out. There is salvation in no one else. For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

That's the implication of having been recognized and seen as rejected and found by God, lifted out of death, installed at the right hand, made Lord and Christ over all. Now we might respond to Peter and say, whoa, wait a minute. Don't you really mean that you're in a Jewish context there and when you say there's no other name to be saved by, you mean Jews have to go through their Messiah, right? That's all you mean.

There's one Jewish way of salvation. They better believe on their Messiah. You're not saying anything about Chinese or American Indians at 33 AD, are you? And the answer is that he is.

He is not just speaking about Jews. The reason is given right here. There is no other name under heaven.

Not under the Jewish heaven or the American heaven or the Iraqi heaven or the Saudi heaven. There is no other name anywhere under heaven by which you can be saved. Moreover, there is no other name under heaven given among men, not just among Jews, but among people by which you must be saved.

It won't do to say he's only addressing the Jewish context. Peter explicitly universalizes it. And then here comes another objection.

This is very common today. It says, okay, there is salvation from no other source but Jesus and his atoning work on the cross. But you don't have to know him to benefit from his salvation.

All you have to be is a faithful, sincere Muslim. Or a faithful, sincere Buddhist. Or a faithful, sincere Hindu.

Or a faithful, sincere animist. Or just faithful and sincere and God in mercy will apply the death of Jesus to you and you'll be saved by him incognito. Real common view running through academic types especially.

Will that work? It won't work. It won't work in this verse. It won't work outside this verse either.

Let me show you why I think it won't. Peter says there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Now why name? What's the implication of the word name? He is saying more than there's no other source for salvation that you can have under other names.

Get that? He is not saying merely there is no other source of salvation which you could get under another name. He's saying there is no other name to appeal to. Salvation comes by calling upon the name of the Lord.

And there aren't any other names to call upon. If you try to call upon another name, you lose. The name is very important here.

Let me try to buttress that a little further. Acts chapter 10 verse 43. Peter is preaching and he says, Everyone who believes in Him, Jesus, receives forgiveness of sins through His name.

It's a faith issue in the name. When you believe in Jesus, you get salvation and forgiveness through the name. If you don't believe in Jesus, you don't get it through the name.

Here's the way Paul put it. It's even more clear in Romans 10, 13. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

But how are they to call upon Him whom they've not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they've not heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how are they to preach unless they be sent? Now, do you get the implication there? You must call upon the name to be saved. How can you call on one you don't believe? How can you believe if you haven't heard? How can you hear without a preacher? How can you preach if you're not sent? Missions is the only answer to people who have not been reached with the gospel. There is no incognito road to heaven.

There is no Muslim road to heaven. There is no Hindu road to heaven. There is no Buddhist road to heaven.

There is no Judaism that leads to heaven apart from their Messiah, Jesus. There is no animistic road to heaven in Irian Jaya. There is no secular or moral road to heaven.

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by Him. Peter pushed the universality of Jesus, this no count Nazareth born teacher to the limit, and said He is absolutely supreme and Lord of all, and everyone must come to terms with Jesus.

Listen to how he calls for repentance in Acts 17. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but God commands now all men everywhere to repent because He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed, and of this He has given assurance to all men by raising Him from the dead. Jesus is Lord of all.

Jesus is the universal and the only way of salvation. This is a radical, crucial, biblical truth with which we must come to terms in our pluralistic day. It is the kind of truth that either makes converts or makes enemies.

It isn't a live and let live truth. We're aliens. We're exiles.

We don't fit in America, nor have we ever fit in America. We don't fit in the America that's coming with its laissez-faire morality. We don't fit in do-your-own-thing religious atmospheres because we make a universal claim to our faith.

There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Now, in closing, let me ask, what does this imply for us today? One, it implies the urgency of understanding our faith. If all ways lead to God, it doesn't matter if you know the right way.

It doesn't matter if you know how to stay on the Christian road. It's not important, and therefore you don't need to read your Bible. You don't need to study.

You don't need to be vigilant over your mind because understanding is of very little significance if all roads lead to the kingdom. But if Peter is right and the Bible is true, there is one road that leads to heaven, one way of salvation, and therefore knowing it, understanding it, following it, staying in it, is all important. There isn't anything more important in your life.

That's number one, understanding. The second implication of the supremacy of Jesus is courage, brothers and sisters. Courage, courage today.

The supremacy and absoluteness of Jesus among all the religions of the world is the cause of all Christian martyrdom. If Christ is not unique and supreme, no one should die for him. If all ways lead to the kingdom, you would be a fool to die for Jesus.

If the state says, confess Caesar as Lord, or more relevantly, if the state says, confess that Allah is the only God and that Muhammad is his prophet, a Christian must say, I will not and I cannot because Caesar is not Lord, Allah as he is known in Islam is not the true God, and Muhammad is not a true prophet. Jesus is Lord of the universe and Jesus alone is the way to truth and everlasting life. You must say that if you're a Christian.

And the question will be put to you sooner or later in more or less dangerous circumstances. Finally, and thirdly, it means understanding, it means courage, and the supremacy of Jesus means that we must have a radical interpretation of war in the Middle East. A radical interpretation of war in the Middle East.

I will ask you a trick question, don't answer it. The trick question is, is there a war going on in the Middle East? And the answer is no, there are two. One of them is being fought with cruise missiles and scud missiles and fighters and bombers.

It is a war between states that are not Christian. I'm going to emphasize again where I began. This is not a conflict between Christians and Muslims.

Most of the pilots in the fighter planes and most of those who are manning the missiles from the allied forces are secularists who believe less in Jesus than Muslims believe in Muhammad. We are not a Christian army in Saudi Arabia. This is not a conflict between Muslims and Christians in spite of there being many of our brothers and sisters there.

There's another war going on. The first one is between a Muslim state and secular states over national boundaries and rights of nations and securities of states and availability of natural resources. The other war is vastly more important.

The other war is more important because the stakes are infinitely higher. They are eternal life and eternal judgment. The one war is risking the earthly death of thousands.

The other war is risking the eternal death of millions. This isn't being fought with missiles or bombers or tanks. It's being fought on the Christian side with weapons of love like faith and prayer and spiritual wisdom and sacrifice and the glorious good news that Jesus Christ forgives any race, any ethnic person, person from any background who will simply repent in belief.

And it is being resisted on the part of Iraqis and Saudis with oppression and anti-Christian state sanctions. In Iraq, Patrick Johnstone says, quote, It is virtually impossible for a Muslim to confess Christ and live. Close quote.

No open Christian witnesses allowed in Iraq. Missionaries were expelled in 1969. 14,000 believers under harassment left Iraq between 1972 and 1977.

There are today in Iraq 12 million Muslims and 2.8 million Kurds, Arab Muslims and Kurdish people and many smaller ethnic groups, all of whom are without Christ and without hope forever unless someone goes to tell them. And Saudi Arabia is almost the most un-evangelized country in the world. There are no known Saudi Christians in Saudi Arabia, though just as she was leaving, one woman said to me of a contact she had about 500 underground Christians in Saudi Arabia, which was a great encouragement to me.

No known Christian workers. No Christian is even allowed to set foot in Mecca, the holy city of Islam. Christian literature and Bibles are banned, though many of our troops took them against the rules.

There are 10 million Muslims in Saudi Arabia without Christ and without hope in the world and in eternity because there is salvation in no one else. For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which they and we must be saved. So there are two wars going on.

The one is risking the loss of thousands of people to temporal earthly death and the other is risking the loss or possible salvation of millions in view of eternal life or eternal death. And the question I want to close with, and I'm not sure what God wants to do with it in our lives, is this. What does it mean that we are almost addicted to this war? That we are totally consumed and taken up with this new war and almost totally oblivious and indifferent to the more important war? Let's pray.

Father, I pray that you would take Peter's perspective now, your apostle, and apply it to our hearts to make us strong and courageous and radical and loving. Oh, that we might not believe the accusation that the claim of Christ's uniqueness is an arrogant claim, but know that it is the only loving claim that can possibly be spoken in downtown Minneapolis or in school or in our neighborhoods. Let not the world interpret for us what is loving and caring and what is not.

May we hear your voice to know that the most important war of the ages is the spiritual war to overcome obstacles in the cause of love, to reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ by which alone people can be saved. I don't know what you want to do right now in people's lives, Lord, but I invite you to come in power and minister to people. And I invite you, to whom he's ministering and calling, to pray.

People will be standing at the front here afterwards. They're here to pray with you about anything at all. You may have brought it or God may have spoken to you about it.

And just seek the Lord together for a few minutes after this service. Now unto the king of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be majesty and glory forever and ever. And all the people said, Amen.

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