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## **The Exclusiveness of Christ**

***By David Wilkerson***

October 29, 2001 On Thursday, September 20, 2001, the President of the United States gave a powerful speech to a joint session of Congress. He warned America that we are now at war against worldwide terrorism. The President called this war a battle between freedom and religious terrorism. The terrorists we're warring against seek to impose their religious beliefs upon the entire world.

That truly is the admitted goal of all Islamic extremists. They want to replace the Bible with the Koran. And they seek to impose a single religion upon the earth: Islam.

Yet the present war goes far beyond this conflict. The war we're involved in has always been, and always will be, between two eternal powers: Satan's principalities and powers, and God's only Son, the divine Christ. Let me explain.

This war started eons ago, in heaven. An actual war took place, with the archangel Michael and an army of angels fighting Lucifer and the rebellious angels who had aligned themselves with him. "There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Revelation 12:7-9).

Lucifer, whom we call Satan, lost the battle. And he was cast down to earth with the other rebellious angels (who comprised a third of all the angels of heaven). So, now the war began to take place on earth. The devil set up a secret, underground kingdom with his demonized angels. And he began waging war against God's people by possessing the bodies of wicked human beings.

Satan started his own religion, uniting those he possessed into one worldwide body. He appointed demon-possessed people to be prophets, teachers, even rulers of nations. And he sent them forth to spread his unholy gospel. But the devil had a problem. He couldn't win converts through his teachings. He couldn't convict or persuade anyone with his gospel. Why? It didn't produce life. It couldn't provide peace, joy or power over enslaving sin.

So Satan had to resort to warfare. And his weapons became force and fear. In short, the devil raised up an army of terrorists to break down the opposition. And he used this bloodthirsty army to take over entire nations. He brought societies under his demonic rule, and he released millions of missionaries from these nations to spread his gospel. Many have since paid with their lives to enforce his one-world religion.

The war Satan wages has always been against God's people. "When the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman [the church] which brought forth the man child" [Christ]" (Revelation 12:13). This persecution began with God's church in the wilderness. Satan possessed Egypt's Pharaoh so he might destroy Israel through slave labor. The devil knew Christ would come through the lineage of Israel. So he sought to obliterate Israel, in order to stop the birth of the "man child."

But Scripture says a "great eagle" swooped down to rescue God's people: "To the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness...where she is nourished for a time...from the face of the serpent" (12:14).

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The Lord delivered his church out of Egypt, and covered them with divine wings of protection: "The Lord's portion is his people...he found him in a desert land, and...he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him" (Deuteronomy 32:9-12).

What an incredible image. Like a fierce mother eagle, God picked up his church and carried her through every trial: at the Red Sea, in the wilderness, and in the Promised Land. He alone would keep and preserve the "woman" who would bear forth Christ.

Consider how Satan sent a flood of enticements to seduce Israel in the wilderness and the Promised Land. Scripture tells us the dragon flooded Israel with demonic principalities: "The serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood" (Revelation 12:15). The mission of these satanic powers was to seduce God's people into devilish idolatries. We see this happen as the nations surrounding Israel enticed them with sensuality of all kinds.

This awful demonic flood continued throughout Israel's history, from the time of the kings down through the prophets. David describes being overwhelmed by floods of ungodly men and deep waters. Likewise, Isaiah writes, "The enemy shall come in like a flood" (Isaiah 59:19).

Finally, at the close of the Old Testament, the church seemed mortally wounded. Satan's flood had just about defeated God's people. By now, Israel's worship was polluted, mixed with sensuality and idolatry. Their awful state caused God to cry out to his people, "Where is my fear?" (Malachi 1:6). And to the priests he thundered, "O priests, that despise my name...ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar...I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand..."

"Ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law... ye have wearied the Lord with your words...ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them" (1:6-7, 10; 2:8, 14, 17).

Yet, at the very end of Malachi, the last book of the Old Covenant, we see a ray of light. The Lord proclaims in the final chapter: "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings...ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this" (4:2-3).

God had a remedy for his hurting church. The Sun of righteousness would come bringing victory. Just when hell seemed to have won, heaven cried, "Help is on the way. Don't fear. The gates of hell will not prevail against God's people."

You see, God had known all along this demonic flood would come. Our Lord is never caught off guard. He knows the end from the very beginning. And he knew Satan's flood upon the church had to be thwarted before it consumed them.

Scripture reveals the help that was coming: "The earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth" (Revelation 12:16). Help came through the resurrection of Christ. When "the earth opened her mouth," it opened the grave that held the Messiah. Satan couldn't keep Jesus sealed under the earth. God opened the tomb, and

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Christ arose. And his resurrection swallowed up the power of Satan's flood. The victory of the cross predetermined the end of all opposition from hell.

What happened next? "The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (12:17). Who is this remnant of the woman's seed? It's us, the church. The devil is now at war with God's people again, in these last days.

But Satan's attacks aren't aimed at what the world calls the church. His battle isn't against religious systems. Satan is attacking the holy seed, the Christ-exalting remnant. He's at war with those who believe and preach Jesus Christ as Lord.

There is a single issue and cause in this final war. The issue at the center of this war is the divinity of Jesus. Is he the Christ, the only begotten of the Father, God in flesh, the Savior of the world? Or, was Jesus just another prophet who went about doing good? Was he an ordinary man, not divine, not the resurrected Savior who sits with God in glory?

The apostle Peter testified to the exclusiveness of Christ: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Peter makes it absolutely exclusive: no other name under heaven provides eternal salvation. Jesus alone is the Messiah, the divine Son of God. And he won't share that glory with any other entity.

Likewise, Paul declares, "What is the exceeding greatness of his power...which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Ephesians 1:19-21). Paul then adds that Jesus is the exclusive head of all things: "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body" (1:22-23).

Paul also points out that one day every creature will acknowledge Jesus as Lord exclusively: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

Every tongue in creation is going to testify, not that Mohammed is Lord, nor Allah, nor any of Hinduism's million gods, but that Jesus Christ is the one and only Lamb of God. That is the issue at the heart of this war. Yet, don't be mistaken: the present war isn't over a name. It's over the divinity of Jesus, the resurrected, Lord.

Right now, the backslidden, ecumenical church is racing into the arms of Satan's strategy for a one-world church. Eventually, this unified church is going to include all of the world's major religions: Catholicism, Greek Orthodoxy, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, even Protestantism. And Satan will accomplish a single compromise between these religions, to bring this unity about. What will bind them together? The name of Jesus.

Of course, the Jesus who binds these groups together will be a different Christ, of a different gospel. Yet the very name will cause once-evangelical denominations to join with other faiths, saying, "We can agree on one thing: Jesus was a teacher and a prophet. And he's a spirit of human goodness in all

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of us. We all can accept him as a holy man."

Imagine the Creator of the universe being reduced to this. Jesus will no longer be accepted as the Christ, the divine Lord. The ecumenical church will do away with any idea of his resurrection and saving power. Instead, they'll use him to unite others in Satan's own one-world religion.

The fact is, the whole world can embrace a Jesus who's only a man. Satan has no problem with that. He can accept the world's admiration and praise of a human-only Jesus. Indeed, many writers have extolled Jesus' human works yet scoffed at his divinity. Some of the most flowery words ever written about him have been authored by agnostic ministers.

Can you see Satan's "love trap" in all of this? When the devil's one-world church finally trumpets its message throughout the earth, millions of lukewarm Christians will be deceived. They'll reason, "This all-church union must be okay. Its leaders talk so much about Jesus. Anybody who speaks of Jesus this much has to have a legitimate Christian faith."

They couldn't be more wrong. The very mantra of Satan's devilish union will be, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus." Today, evangelical leaders are already asking, "Why can't all groups be one in Jesus? After all, Jews acknowledge Jesus as a prophet. Muslims see him as a good man and a great teacher. Even Sikhs and Hindus respect Jesus."

Let me stop here to make something clear: I'm thankful for the national unity that has risen from the tragedy of September 11. I'm grateful that Americans of various faiths have been able to stand together as a nation united. I pray this unity remains long after our grief subsides.

But the unity of religions we're about to see will involve something much different. What I foresee is contained in Jesus' prophecy: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works?" (Matthew 7:22).

Almost all religions perform exorcisms. And certain churches claim great successes in exorcizing demons. But many such churches do their exorcisms, teachings and good works in a different Jesus' name. As Christ points out, these people will claim at the judgment, "Lord, we did all these things in your name. We were Jesus people." But the Lord will answer, "Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (7:23).

Jesus will tell them, "I don't know you. And you certainly don't know me. I was the living Son of God, but you told everybody I was just a man. You tried to take away the power of my gospel. You've got the wrong Jesus. Now, depart from me. You have no part in my kingdom."

Paul warns us not to be corrupted away from "the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3). The Greek word for simplicity in this verse means singleness, exclusiveness. In other words, "Christ isn't a complex entity. The truth about him is very simple: Jesus is God. He is divine, born of a virgin, crucified and raised from the dead. But I'm afraid you're being corrupted away from this single, exclusive truth." "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity [the utter exclusiveness] that is in Christ" (11:3).

Paul then warns of ministers who preach a different Jesus: "If he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or

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another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him" (11:4). Paul was telling the Corinthians, in essence, "You're listening to another gospel, not to the gospel of Christ. You're hearing about another Jesus, not the one who saved you. And I fear you're going to be corrupted by this different Jesus, who isn't the real Christ at all.

"You don't know it, but you're being led away from the divinity of Christ. And I can't believe you put up with it. You're bearing with these teachers who are corrupting you. You don't even test what they say, to see if it's scriptural. Right now, you're losing your discernment. You're sitting under a demonic gospel, with another Jesus being exalted. And you don't know where it's leading you."

A great persecution is coming to the holy remnant of saints. Satan's ecumenical union of churches will bring about a great persecution. And the union itself will be the chief persecuting force. Even now, the Russian Orthodox Church is pressuring Russia's government to shut down all evangelical churches in that country. They want to drive out evangelical Christianity completely from their midst.

Here in America we see the beginnings of the same kind of pressure. I was handed a videotape of a network TV interview with a well-known evangelist. The interviewer asked the minister point blank: "Will Muslims be saved? And will Jews be saved if they don't believe in Jesus?"

Clearly, the evangelist was being pressed into a corner. He knew if he answered with Peter's statement, "There is no other name whereby men can be saved except Jesus Christ, the Son of God," he would have been despised. The press would have crucified him.

Instead, the evangelist was applauded for his answer: "Muslims love Jesus. And Jews have the Spirit of Jesus in them. Yes, they'll both be saved." I couldn't believe what I heard this committed Christian leader saying.

It's impossible to be accepted by the world if you take a stand on the divinity of Christ. You'll be shunned and rejected, made a target of mockery. On the other hand, any minister who's praised by the world and by other religions has compromised Christ's gospel. Such a person preaches another Jesus.

I believe the whole world will make this the defining question in the days ahead: "Do you believe in the exclusiveness of Jesus Christ? Are people going to hell because they don't believe he's the only way to salvation?" We'll be confronted with this by non-believing friends, coworkers, potential employers. They may not ask it in such literal terms, but the question will remain nonetheless. And if we take a stand, answering, "Yes, I believe Jesus alone can save," we'll be seen as religious bigots. We'll be mocked and persecuted as being politically incorrect and intolerant.

As evangelical Christians, we at Times Square Church are not anti-Semitic, anti-Islamic or anti-anyone. We believe God loves the whole world. He loves Jews, Muslims, homosexuals, atheists. But as Christians, we're compelled to disagree about faith with each of these, because we stand on the Bible as God's Word.

You may think such persecution won't come until the distant future. But right now, various ecumenical groups are drafting theological statements for the one-world church union. And they're dealing with what they call "the Jesus issue."

Already the European Union of nations has drawn up laws forbidding any criticism of its activities.

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Soon, no one will be able to publicly question the union. I believe this type of climate will give rise to the one-world church. The European Union's laws are now only a step away from forbidding "religious bigotry" and outlawing proselytizing in the name of any religion.

In my opinion, this is all part of Satan's wrath against the holy seed of Christ on earth. He's waging war by enraging multitudes, regardless of their belief, against Christians. More and more, we'll see the devil mobilizing masses to confront anyone who believes Jesus alone has the power to save. Suddenly, everyone who ignored us before will ask us pointedly, "Do you believe Jesus is the only way to heaven? I'm a good person, but I don't believe in anything. Are you telling me I'll go to hell because I don't believe your Jesus is God?"

Taking a stand for truth may cost us our jobs, careers, friendships. In some countries, it's already costing Christians their lives. Yet Jesus is our example of how to respond. When the high priest asked, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?", Jesus answered without hesitation, "I am" (Mark 14:61-62).

Soon the whole world will ask us to accept another Jesus. They'll pressure us to put aside our faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord. They'll want us to deny his virgin birth, his supernatural power, his miracles, his sacrificial death, his resurrection, his second coming. Yet, as his followers, we know these are truths on which eternity hinges. And we must be willing to die for them.

I've already decided how I'm going to answer. To anyone who poses these questions, I'll state with love and compassion: "You have the right to believe as you choose. Or, you have the right to disbelieve. You can worship any god, or you can worship nothing. I won't interfere with any path you pursue. But I also have the right to believe what I choose. And I believe there is no other name under heaven whereby we may be saved, but Jesus Christ. My God loves everybody. And the cross of Christ is proof of that love."

The Victor in this war has already been predetermined. The book of Daniel gives us a prophetic look at how the present war is going to end. King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream, and Daniel interpreted it:

"Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image...whose brightness was excellent...and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay" (Daniel 2:31-33).

The king had dreamed of a huge image in human form, bright, shining and terrible. Its entire body was made of sturdy metal. Yet its feet were made of clay. Daniel pointed out that this image represented the kingdoms of the world, and the clay signified the weakness of the last world powers. These kingdoms would become less bright and terrible as the end approaches. Then Daniel continued:

"Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then the...pieces became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away...and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (2:34-35).

The stone Daniel describes here is none other than Jesus Christ. He is the Rock of Ages. And he's coming down out of heaven to smash all earthly empires. When the world sees this happen, our Lord's divinity will be undeniable. Every knee will bow before him and every tongue confess that Jesus

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Christ is Lord.

We're not going to bring down terrorists with our weapons, bombers or missiles. We can't rid the world of such vile wickedness by human might. God says the kingdom of his Son will finally break and consume all evil empires. Yes, there will be justice. But it will come from the heavenly Father above.

What a day it's going to be when all the world's terrorists wake up before the judgment seat of Christ. They'll think, "We were promised paradise for our sacrifice. We were told we would have beautiful women, and luscious food and drink, for all eternity." But they'll suddenly realize that the very name they tried to wipe out completely now stands before them as their Judge.

My message to you here boils down to this single verse: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). Jesus' statement here is absolutely exclusive. No Muslim, no Hindu, no Jew, no Gentile, nobody can come to the Father by any way except Christ.

Just as Jesus asked his twelve disciples, he asks us today: "Whom do men say that I am?" (Mark 8:27). The disciples answered, "John the Baptist: but some say, Elias [Elijah]; and others, One of the prophets" (8:28). But Jesus' real question to his followers came next: "He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?" (8:29).

Our answer must be the same as Peter's: "Thou art the Christ" (8:29). May this be our confession before the whole world, now and forever.

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