

Series: A Weary World Rejoices

“JESUS: THE ONE AND ONLY”

Acts 4:12

Big Idea – Jesus Christ is the only Way to get to God the Father.

“Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other Name, under heaven, given among men whereby you must be saved.”

The culture is asking us to give up Jesus for a greater religious cause. Several years ago Joseph Stowell, the President of Moody Seminary spoke at a Pastor’s Conference and related the following personal story.

He had gone to the Chicago Leadership Prayer Breakfast. The major segment of this event included a Mullah from the Muslim faith, a protestant church leader, a Roman Catholic priest, and a Jewish rabbi. Each of them prayed a prayer in unison symbolizing that they were all praying to the same god in reality.

The speaker for that morning was the director of Holy Trinity Church on Wall Street, which was right next to ground zero. He said, “After 9-11, theology is back. God is back, but in this new environment we must all be willing to give up those traditions that divide us so we can be one.” He went on to say that God speaks to other faiths and other religious groups.

Stowell was stunned. He was being asked to give up Jesus. He hoped the man would not get a standing ovation, but he did. Joseph Stowell knew that if he stood he would be denying Jesus. So, he remained seated and refused to clap.

This push to blur the distinctions of various religions and create a one-world religion is upon us. Thomas Friedman wrote in the New York Times, “It is urgent that the different religions reinterpret their traditions to embrace modernity and pluralism and to create space for secularism and alternative faiths.”

Going back to the first century I want you to see that this pressure to give up Jesus is nothing new. Peter and John had been instruments of the risen Savior to heal a man who had been lame his entire life. This man gets up and runs into the temple praising God. As you might expect, a great crowd gathers and Peter begins to preach.

In this sermon he points out that Jesus Christ is the Author of life [3:15]; He was raised from the dead [3:15]: He fulfilled a 1500 year-old prophecy [3:22]: He is coming again [3:21]: and all the families of the earth are blessed through Him [3:25]. Jesus Christ has global impact! This was his message.

When we come to Acts 4, we find that the Jewish officials arrested them for preaching Jesus. After spending the night in jail, these believers were called to stand before the religious leaders of Judaism. In defense of their actions, these men—now filled and anointed with the Holy Spirit—proclaim the absolute supremacy of Jesus Christ. They were being asked to give up Jesus. But they refused. Look at verse 12, which is our text for today: “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.”

Today you and I need to feel the impact of this audacious claim—“There is salvation in no one else.” We need to wrestle with this claim because you and I are being asked in many subtle ways to give up Jesus for a greater religious cause. I want you to see three practical ways of examining the supremacy of Jesus.

1. The Supremacy of Jesus Declared

The supremacy of Jesus is declared exclusively. Our world hates this word. Carl Sandburg said that the word “exclusive” is the worst word in the English language. But, I want you to know that Jesus Christ Himself made many exclusive claims.

Just look at John’s gospel. Jesus claimed to be the eternal God [Jn. 1:1; Jn. 8:58]. He claimed the exalted position of judging the world [Jn. 5:22]; and He claimed to be the only Savior of the entire human race [Jn. 14:6; Jn. 10:9].

Do you see why Peter made his exclusive claim in our text today? Jesus Christ is not a local god vying for the affection of other nations. He is the one, true God who has been declared to be the exclusive Savior of the entire world! There is only one person—one name in the whole universe that has the power to save and bring a person to heaven to live with God forever. That name is Jesus!

The supremacy of Jesus is declared inclusively also. Christians are bashed because they preach that Jesus is the only one who can save. Here is the other side of the world's half-truth. Jesus Christ is the exclusive Savior who inclusively invites the entire world to be saved. Take His word in John 3:16—"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Anyone can be saved if they come to Jesus.

Do you see now how the supremacy of Jesus is declared both exclusively and inclusively? The question is this—will you allow the culture to cause you to give up Jesus?

2. The Supremacy of Jesus Distorted

Our culture can be slick at times. Subtly, it moves against the church of Jesus Christ with deadly effectiveness and stealth. Take the following examples for instance.

Relativism

Jason is a 38-year-old single economics professor in California. In response to a question asking why he didn't attend church, he replied, "I know you don't like to hear this but I really don't see how Jesus can be the only way to heaven. I definitely believe in God, but there are just too many people in the world who don't believe in Jesus for me to think that God doesn't love them too."

This is pure relativism. Based on this philosophy, one concludes that it makes no difference what you believe. There are no absolute truths. What is true for me may not be true for you and vice versa. Relativism distorts the supremacy of Jesus, but there are other distortions also.

Syncretism

Tina Turner sold 30 million records in her day. She said, "I'm a Buddhist/Baptist. My training is Baptist, and I can still relate to the Ten Commandments. It's all very close, as long as you contact the subconscious mind. That's where the coin of the Almighty is. I don't care what they feel about me and my tight pants on stage, and my lips and my hair. I am a chanter. And everyone who knows anything about chanting knows you correct everything in your life by chanting every day."

This is syncretism. This philosophy is based on the theory that all religions have some measure of truth. One sees the totality of God's full revelation through all religions. This too distorts the supremacy of Jesus and brings Him down to the level of Mohammed, Buddha, Confucius, and others.

There are those who call themselves Christians who take a wider mercy view, which is also a distortion of the supremacy of Jesus. That is, God makes exceptions for sincere followers of other religions by applying Christ's saving work to them after they die. This is done even though they never believed in Jesus. This too is a blatant distortion.

All of these subtle attempts to distort the supremacy of Jesus can sometimes appear logical. But, are they?

3. The Supremacy of Jesus Defended

Was Peter right when he made his bold claim? Let me tell you, the supremacy of Jesus is defended by reason. One of the rules of logic states that a truth is true all the time. Truth never contradicts itself. Two plus two is four whether you live in America or Thailand.

By reason

We have already seen how Jesus claimed to be God in the flesh. He claimed to have the ability to forgive sins, to heal the sick, to raise the dead, and He did all these things. Now, either Jesus Christ was telling the truth or He was a liar. You can't have it both ways.

Therefore, you are not left with the option of lowering Jesus down to the level of other religious leaders. Either you believe Him or you don't. You can't patronize God!

By revelation

Notice, the supremacy of Jesus is defended by revelation. The God of the Bible does not buy into the culture's distortions of truth. He never has. Look at the following verses: Exodus 20:3; 1 Kings 18:21; Isaiah 44:6; 1 Timothy 2:5; and 1 Jn. 5:12. Clearly the Bible teaches that there is only one God and one Savior that can reconcile sinful man to the Holy God.

So how does the living and true God feel about other religions who reject the supremacy of His Son—Jesus Christ? Are they really authentic attempts to worship God as they know Him? Listen to

Romans 1:18 But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness.

19 They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them.

20 For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.

21 Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused.

22 Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools.

23 And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.

1 Corinthians 10:19-21 What am I trying to say? Am I saying that food offered to idols has some significance, or that idols are real gods?

20 No, not at all. I am saying that these sacrifices are offered to demons, not to God. And I don't want you to participate with demons.

21 You cannot drink from the cup of the Lord and from the cup of demons, too. You cannot eat at the Lord's Table and at the table of demons, too.

God's Word cuts like a two-edged sword separating truth from lies and the divine from the demonic. Any religion that gives up the supremacy of Jesus Christ is a lie hatched in the very bowels of hell.

Do you know why Peter was so confident he had the truth and everybody else was wrong? God raised Jesus Christ from the dead! This validated the entire ministry of Jesus, including every claim He ever made. God has made this Jesus both Lord and Christ.

Application:

Make no mistake about it. The pressure to give up the supremacy of Jesus is increasing. The early believers were forced to deal with this challenge. For them it was either religion or Jesus...Caesar or the Lord Jesus.

The point is this—you must deal with this pressure. You can't avoid it, because it is only going to get worse.

There are three responses you and I are forced to make.

Correct Responses

1. first response is conversion. Jesus is the truth. He said it and He backed it up with His life, death, and resurrection. You have only two choices here. Either you receive Him as your personal Lord and Savior or you reject Him outright. There is no middle ground. He invites you to believe Him and trust Him. Will you?

2. second response is courage. In the face of antagonism, do you have the courage to stand for Jesus unashamedly? Listen to Paul's word to the believers in Philippi, "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; in no way alarmed by your opponents—which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God." [Phil. 1:27-28] Jude said that we must contend earnestly for the faith. This takes courage. Do you have it? When it comes to the supremacy of Jesus, are you wishy washy? Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might! Ask God for courage today.

Acts 4: 29 Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word,

Acts 4:29 And now, Lord, listen to their threats. Lord, help us, your servants, to speak your word without fear.

3. third response is commitment. Our job is to get this truth of Jesus to our neighbors and the nations. Jesus Christ is the only name under heaven by which we or anyone else can be saved. Will you tell others about Jesus?

Listen, Jesus is the one and only Savior and Lord of this world. This is the truth. So lift Him up church. Honor Him with your life and your lips. Praise Him with your whole

heart. He is worthy! He is worthy! He is worthy! “God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” [Phil. 2:9-11] Give Him glory! Give Him glory! Give Him glory! He is Jesus Christ, the one and only!