

# The Christian and Holy War

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 31 July 2005

Preacher: William Philip

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, I want to spend some time this evening thinking about the current world situation, full of crisis as it is with the recent atrocities in London and Egypt, and all the many issues that once again it throws up for us in our thinking concerning fundamentalist religion and holy war and so on.

It's very important as Christians that we're able to think through these issues in an informed way, and especially that we should be guided in our thinking in a biblical way, so that we can know how to respond as Christians at a time like this.

So tonight I want to look particularly at three things. First of all, how our Western secularism, the societies that we live in here, tends to approach the problem that we're facing. Then how Islam itself speaks and thinks about a holy war or jihad.

And then what the Bible teaches that we should understand as Christians about this subject. So first of all then, the secularist perspective on what's been called the current war on terror.

It's interesting that world leaders are very concerned at the moment to say, aren't they, that this is not a religious war. So that after the bombings on the 7th of July, we had the deputy commissioner of the Metropolitan Police saying that Islam and terrorism are words which do not go together.

[ 1 : 27 ] Strikes you as absolutely extraordinary. They could have said that. But that's what world leaders are very keen to do. Distance this from any sense of religious warfare.

They're doing that for a number of reasons. Firstly, it's one of political expediency, of course.

They're very afraid of igniting throughout the world a worse conflict.

If this kind of thing is seen to be a religious war against Islam, governments in the West want to keep moderate Islamic governments on board in the coalition in this war against terror.

They want to keep the focus rightly on the terrorists, not upon innocent Muslims. That's understandable. Secondly, they do this because they want to dissuade people from wrong kinds of reprisals, reprisals, hapless Asian individuals in the West being set upon by racist groups and so on.

Of course, that's right. But they also hold to this line primarily, I think, because, largely speaking, they are secularists and relativists. In other words, they think that all religions are much the same, with similar merits and demerits.

[ 2 : 39 ] They reckon that each religion, actually, is just as likely to produce its own fanatics, its own extremists, if the circumstances are conducive to it.

To them, you see, religion just complicates matters far better to keep it out of it. So, we'll use words like evil and wicked and so on, but actually, what we really mean by that is deranged or unreasoned or unacceptable.

Things which just won't do in a civilized society. Now, religion, they say, must look beyond itself to a higher plane of the cherished values of our modern West, of pluralism and democracy.

That's our standard. And our leaders say, if any religion is going to fit into that, coexists with it, it must fit in with ease and be a part of that world order.

Otherwise, how can it call itself a religion? I mean, religion, after all, is just offering its own particular contribution to the good of society. That's how the secularist thinks.

[ 3 : 44 ] Actually, it's a very patronizing and arrogant way to think, because what it says is that none of these religions can be right in and of themselves. They're all just the same. They're all just saying the same thing. But to be able to say that, you have to be omniscient.

You have to be able to declare fearlessly that there's no truth. And you are the only one who knows it. It's actually to take a very, very patronizing view to say that there can be no truth.

But as Christians who take the Bible seriously, we have to realize that ultimately the terrorism we've witnessed and the hatred that engenders it, ultimately it all springs from opposition in the heart of

man to the one true and living God and to his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The second psalm tells us most clearly that all the nations are raging together against God and his anointed one, his Christ. Now, of course, the oppressive secularism that we live in in the West is part of that raging as well.

It's part of that opposition. And Western nations scorn and rage against God in their own way. But the fact is, nevertheless, that at the present time, Islam is a very large and increasingly powerful physical force in the world against Christ and his church.

[ 5 : 11 ] And so for Christians to fail to realize that underneath all of this, there really is a very true and real religious question would be very naive indeed. In the 1930s, Sir Norman Anderson was a missionary in Egypt and later he went on to become an expert in Arab literature and Islamic law.

And he has written much about Islam. In one of his books, he says this, from the very beginning, Muslims have divided the world into the Dar al-Islam, that is the sphere of Islam, where Islam reigns supreme, and the Dar al-Harb, the abode of war, where the rule of Islam must be extended, if necessary, by force.

I want to refer to some of the things that he wrote many decades ago, because I think we can now perceive them to be a real prophetic insight into the current situation.

Way back writing then, he predicted that Islam would face the greatest crisis in its history because of the inevitability of a conflict between it and the currents of the modern world, the globalization, which is unavoidable.

And I think his analysis is very well worth rehearsing. So instead of those few comments about our secular Western world, let me turn now to the Islamic perspective and the pressure for jihad, for a holy war.

[ 6 : 38 ] So Norman Anderson's analysis is this. He says, first of all, that the great tension facing Islam today arises, first of all, because Islam is a dominant creed, a dominant creed. Quote, it's not so much that Islam has sometimes been imposed at the point of the sword, as that the whole attitude of Muslims to non-Muslims is conceived as that of victor to vanquished, of ruler to ruled.

So you see, the modern Muslim living in what's perceived to be a Christian nation, or any non-Muslim nation for that matter, under any non-Muslim government, is finding themselves in a circumstance that was never really envisaged by early Islam.

Instinctively, Muslims feel that their practice can't be reconciled with that sort of situation at all. To begin with, it's true the Prophet Muhammad and his followers were a persecuted minority in Mecca. But they became the dominant force after Muhammad's conquest of Medina. They took over the whole of Arabia, of North Africa, of much of even Southern Europe.

As one writer has put it, Islam as a creed is, quote, programmed to win. It's a dominant creed. And that explains the strenuous efforts in many parts of the world towards independent Muslim states.

[ 8 : 01 ] Second, he says, Islam is essentially a theocratic creed where every aspect of the state and individual life is inextricable from the practice of the religion.

It can't conceive, therefore, of the idea that we have in the West, of the separation between the church and the state, of a separation between a secular government and the religious law in the church or in religion.

Moreover, Dar al-Islam, the sphere of Islam, Islam is seen as one. It's seen as indivisible, as it once was, under one caliph, one ruler of the whole domain of Islam.

And so it was for many, many centuries. But since the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, that caliphate has never been realized again. And indeed, the Muslim national states that do exist, even now, are mostly really under the more Western type of model.

And because of that, even in Islamic countries, any Muslim is faced with an intrinsic divided loyalty between the nation state and between the great state, the abode of Islam.

[ 9 : 10 ] And that's the dilemma, you see, that lies at the root of so many of the Islamic countries, in particular places like Pakistan, where you have essentially a secular state.

And there's great tension between that and the Islamic religious law. It's a theocratic creed. Thirdly, Islam is essentially a dogmatic creed.

Not only is the Quran accepted as the very dictated words of God, but the actual interpretations and applications of the Quran, down to a very, very minute level, are accepted in exactly the same way. So, Anderson says, these traditions of doctrine, the Tawhid, and jurisprudence, that's the Sharia, they remain the dominant orthodoxy in every area of life. Quote, from the prohibition of crime to the

use of the toothpick, and from the organization of the state to the most sacred intimacies. Now, these things were all largely fixed in the very early years of Islam, in the Middle Ages. And that explains the impossible tension, the clash of ideologies that faces the Muslim purists today in the onslaught that they see from globalization, from the modern, secularized, McDonaldized world that we live in.

[ 10 : 31 ] And that explains the pressure, the drive that there is for a pure Islam, for a return to a pure Islamic world, a pure Islamic state. The sphere of Islam extending and being protected.

That's why we saw smashed up TVs and smashed up videos, all these things, in Afghanistan under the Taliban. It was a determined return to a pre-modern era, a time when Islam reigned supreme. But you see, the problem for the West today is that that kind of defensive retreat into a pure Islam is clearly perceived by many conservative Islamists to be nothing nearly like enough to protect them from the threat against Islam that's posed by our secularism, by materialism, by what they perceive to be Christianity.

For them, you see, that's not enough. And that's why an offensive attack is needed, both to stem the assault of these values drifting in from the Dar al-Harb, the abode of war where Islam doesn't yet reign, and to capture the rest of the world for Islam, to reunite the whole Islamic world under one great sphere of Islam where one great leader rules, where the Islamic law reigns like a theocracy, where all the threats to the Islamic dogma are put away.

And that's why there's such a messianic longing for a new leader, a new caliph, somebody who would rally the world of Islam altogether and bring us back to the way things once were.

[ 12 : 10 ] I think that helps us see why there's such a great place for somebody like Osama bin Laden in the affections, the hopes, the desires of many devout and pure Muslims.

So despite the many efforts of Western leaders to paint a very rosy picture of Islam, and the efforts of many Western Muslims to try and do the same thing, the fact remains that influential Muslim leaders and clerics all over the world have called again and again for jihad against America and the West, the Christians, the Jews, the forces arrayed against Islam.

So for example, in Pakistan, during the American strikes on Afghanistan, a fatwa was issued stating that two Pakistani Christians would be murdered for every single Afghan who was killed.

One of the members of Pakistan's government told journalists quite openly that the Quran clearly states that Jews and Christians are the enemies of Muslims and by inference should be killed. So when Muslim clerics like Yusuf al-Karadawi quoted recently in our broadsheet newspapers, when he says that bombings and martyrdom in the name of God, that suicide bombings are martyrdoms in the name of God, when he says things like we will conquer Europe, we will conquer America, he's simply expounding the logical outworking of the basic tenets of Islam which are fundamentally at odds with the encroaching global culture.

They want the recapture and the reintegration of their worldview, the religious view, the cultural view, the political view, all to be one under a realm of Islam.

[ 13 : 56 ] Let me quote to you from this book, Tony Payne, Islam in Our Backyard. He says, there's no question that violent means and military expansionism have been integral to Islam from the very beginning.

Indeed, given the unity that Islam sees between religion and the state, it could hardly be otherwise. The expansion of Islam is the expansion of the Islamic state. By contrast, then, those who hold to more moderate and liberal views have not been so true to the inner logic of the Islamic faith. And that's why the so-called moderate Muslims of the West are held in such disdain and such scorn by those who consider themselves to be devout. Those who say that Islam is fundamentally peaceful and tolerant are scorned and derided by many pure and devout Muslims.

Listen to these words that Tony Payne quotes from the late Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran. He says this, those who study Islamic holy war will understand why Islam wants to conquer the whole world. Those who know nothing of Islam pretend that Islam cancels against war. Those who say this are witless. Islam says, kill all the unbelievers just as they would kill you.

[ 15 : 20 ] He goes on to say, the sword is the key to paradise which can only be open for holy warriors. There are hundreds of other Quranic psalms and hadith urging Muslims to value war and to fight.

Does all that mean that Islam is a religion that prevents men from waging war? I spit upon those foolish souls who make such claims, says the Ayatollah.

In other words, Payne says, to place the adjective militant in front of Islam as if there is an essential Islam that is not militant is to misunderstand Islam.

So despite claims to the contrary then, the truth seems unavoidable that those who are calling for these things are being more true to Islam than those moderate Muslims in the West who are saying that these attitudes know no part in their religion.

It's they who have actually been in varying degrees westernized. And that's exactly why those of the ilk of Osama bin Laden and the Taliban and so on, that's why they abhor them and fear them, that's why they're fighting to prevent that very process because they see it as destructive of their belief.

[ 16 : 32 ] That's why the very presence of American troops on the sacred soil of Saudi Arabia is such a threat to fundamentalist Islam. What more pregnant symbol could there be of western imperialism, apostasy, than soldiers of America at the very heart of the Islamic lands?

And that is what justifies in their eyes jihad, the terror, the outrage, the outworking of holy war that we've become accustomed to.

That's all I'm going to say about the Islamic perspective. There will be a great, great deal more that would need to be said. I do recommend this book to you, Islam in Our Backyard by Tony Payne. We've got a good number of copies on the bookstall here.

You'll read it in just a few hours but it's very informative and very helpful. But we do need to turn tonight to a Christian perspective on all of this.

I want to talk about, I think, five fundamental Christian perspectives that we must keep in mind as we think about this whole area of holy war. First of all, we as Christians must have a clear perspective on the ultimate issue, that of truth and error, that of heaven and hell.

[ 17 : 50 ] Because for the Christian, there's a much more fundamental issue at stake than the question of the terrorism that we're seeing. Islam's worst evil is not just that it may drive people to commit murder and acts of terror.

Islam's worst error is that as a creed, we believe it to be absolutely mistaken. We believe that it's not true. We believe that under its scourge, multitudes of people are heading for an eternity without Christ.

That is the most fundamental perspective that we as Christians must have about this. And friends, we've got to remind ourselves about that because in these days of secular influences from the culture, we are so easily and so insidiously blinded to these stark realities about truth and falsehood.

Islam today is one of the greatest hindrances to reaching a huge part of the world's population with the gospel of salvation by which alone men and women will be saved.

Just as the Soviet empire was a decade or two ago, today the fact is that Islam is a huge barrier to the mission of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now we've got to be careful in our thinking.

[ 19 : 10 ] But I wonder whether as with the fall of communism, it could be that the currents in our world at this time are part of God's judgment on some of these regimes. Perhaps the only way to open up some of these lands to the gospel of Christ.

I don't know. But I do know that just a few years ago it was virtually impossible in Afghanistan under the Taliban for anybody to preach, proclaim the Christian gospel.

And I also know that Jesus' words are very harsh indeed against any who would obstruct little ones from hearing and following the truth. He says it would be better literally for them to be cast into the sea with a millstone around their neck.

And undoubtedly that must apply to those who prevent people hearing the gospel by force like the Taliban did. But of course at the same time it applies no less strongly to those who claim to be in the Christian church but also have in reality deserted the gospel and succumbed to liberalism and pluralism by implying that all religions ultimately are the same.

By implying that we shouldn't try to convert others to Christ because that would be fundamentalist, that would be culturally imperialist. We've got to be very, very careful as Christians that we're not affected by the sentimentalism of the world around us that rejects any sense of God's judgment either temporal or eternal.

[ 20 : 39 ] At the heart of the New Testament gospel we're seeing it this morning in Matthew 11 the heart of it is a message of a coming judgment under one judge Jesus Christ the one whom God has appointed to be judge of the living and the dead the just and the unjust.

And that's why the cross is so central and so awful. It was the place of mercy but it was the place of mercy only through the judgment upon the sin of man in the flesh of the Son of God.

So the most fundamental perspective that we must have is one of truth and error. Our thinking must be guided by the fact that the gospel of the one way of salvation must be preached to men and women in every part of the world and in every place.

And that whatever sets itself up against that is directly in opposition to God and faces God's judgment. Second, we must have a clear perspective on the whole question of holy war.

The Western government's response to the current terrorism is of course not the same as the Christian church's response. Even if we were truly Christian nations and of course we're nothing like it even if we were we are not a theocracy.

[ 21 : 59 ] The kingdom of Christ is not an earthly kingdom and it's very vital that we grasp and understand that. Yes, when we read our Bibles we find that in the Old Testament Israel was a theocracy for a time directly ruled by God.

But she was playing her unique historic role in God's plan of redemption. Then Israel was the gospel nation a nation favored by God blessed by God unique.

not only as a privileged custodian of God's revelation of himself to mankind and the promises of his covenant but also as a sacred guardian a guardian of the promised seed the physical seed of the world's redeemer Jesus Christ and it was precisely because the salvation of the world depended upon the preservation of that particular chosen bloodline the seed of the woman the seed of Abraham the son of David was because of that that God kept Israel under earthly physical protection until the time had come and the Christ was born until he came in the flesh to effect our salvation and that protection was needed you just have to read the Old Testament scriptures to see throughout the Bible all the way through Israel's history there was wars they had enemies right from the beginning opposition conflict from the surrounding nations in fact you can hardly understand the ferocity the intensity of that opposition unless you see behind the mere earthly things and understand that behind it all lay that great heavenly warfare the evil one that ancient serpent the devil

Satan seeking to throw all that he could to prevent the coming of the Christ and so until his coming until the incarnation Israel was continually involved in holy war on earth and God fought with her and God fought for her fighting for an earthly nation and then in those days the gospel battles were often fought with the warfare weapons of men but you see the Bible also tells us that now that decisive moment is past that Christ has come that war has been won that he's triumphed over sin and guilt and hell that victory is accomplished that a new age has begun now of course yes the Bible also tells us that the gospel battle goes on and it will do right until the end until Christ comes again and the opposition is the same it's in the heavenly realms we read it there in Ephesians chapter 6 but the battle is no longer to preserve the physical seed of

Christ until he comes no it's to preserve his physical seed until he comes again in glory it's to preserve those who were told are heirs according to the promise who through the preaching of the gospel even now are being gathered from all over the world from every tribe and tongue and people and nation and that's why Paul tells us in 2nd Corinthians 10 as we read that the weapons of God's people and his kingdom are not any longer the weapons of this world on the contrary says Paul the great weapon is the sword of the spirit of God given into our hand the gospel of God that's what is mighty to the pulling down of strongholds to the destroying of arguments to the making captive of minds and hearts to the king of this world to the Lord Jesus Christ our weapon our only weapon that we have is the sword of truth wielded in the power of prayer and that's why incidentally our government's current legislation their ban on inciting religious hatred is actually much more dangerous in many ways than terrorism it seeks to suppress the truth by stopping us arguing for the truth lest it offends somebody of another religion that's suppressing the real weapons of

[ 26 : 09 ] God the gospel the power of God for salvation and that weapon is much much more powerful than any bomb guns and this is the holy war that God's people are called to today it's a war to the death yes but as believers in Jesus Christ the death is not that of others it's ours Christian martyrs don't kill it's quite the opposite Paul says rather we're being always given over to death for Jesus sake so that his life may be revealed in others so that we may bear fruit for the kingdom that's our mission that's what it means to be Christian soldiers we must have a right perspective on holy war for the Christian third we must have a clear perspective on current world history what are we to think of the current earthly events the wars that we see the terrorism well

despite what I've said about our spiritual warfare of course we must also see that the

New Testament gospel age hasn't banished God from the stage of world history world events are not divorced from the ongoing history of the progress of the gospel and of the redemptive purposes of God of course not both are integrally linked although the trouble is that so often today as evangelicals we retreat into a kind of pietism that separates the church's mission from the world but the scriptures would want us to be much much wiser about the history unfolding round about us world history is church history the recent evangelical ministry assembly in London Gary Williams gave a fascinating lecture on understanding and reading history and his point was this that there is only two ways there are only two ways to read history either in terms of Christ and his kingdom and relating to that and to the church or with no reference to it whatsoever in other words all history is either

Christian or it is anti-Christian the way we look at it and the truth is that God acts in history now as he has done always through his providence Calvin said the world is the theater in which he displays his power to men but at the very heart of that stage is his church and his focus is on the progress on the growth on the completion the preparation of his church for eternity Ephesians 1 tells us that Christ is head over all things in the universe for his church and so ultimately world events world history everything is to do with the growth and the progress of the church of Jesus Christ the church is the center of the world therefore it's the center of history and by its relation to Jesus Christ the church is bride the church too is the center of eternity and no secular historian or politician understands that but we as Christians must understand that the church explains the world and yet God also cares about the world as a whole Paul tells us doesn't he that God has placed authority into the hands of the powers that be and in part that is at least that we on earth should image him should reflect his divine authority and his righteous rule on earth it's one aspect of the image of God and surely that's something we should pray for when we pray the Lord's prayer thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven it's part of his common grace to all mankind and I think at a time like the present and the current crisis that we face we must take very seriously indeed Paul's words rulers hold no terror for those who do right but for those who do wrong do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority then do what is right and he'll commend you for he is God's servant to do you good but if you do wrong be afraid for he does not bear the sword for nothing he is God's servant an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrong doer there are certain human rights lawyers who need to read that and take that very seriously indeed but that's not to say of course that's not to say that God flies the stars and stripes or the

Union Jack or any other flag for that matter far from it nevertheless the United States of America is at the moment the dominant world power and as such I think we have to see that country as having a particular responsibility to lead others in upholding justice but of course that justice must be right and as far as possible it must be seen to be right in the eyes of the world that's why efforts to build up partnerships and coalitions and so on wherever possible is not just strategically important it's actually morally important and imperative but of course it's very hard because men and women are not perfect we're sinners and because it's always easier isn't it to find fault in others than in ourselves but sometimes in this fallen world justice involves war and retribution the bible does not allow us to say that war in and of itself per se is always intrinsically wrong

[ 31 : 49 ] I think we can say it is always a terrible thing but of course how it is waged can be wrong and there may be deceit and lies and spin from governments which may be very wrong governments must come to terms with that also they are not above all correction God works his justice yes he does but he does so through human powers and agencies and all of these we must recognize are sinful all of these have mixed motives God's will is done but on the other hand God will not be mocked by men and God will not be tainted by the sin of men so we must be warned and governments must be warned there are many places in the bible you know where we get a great insight on this when the scripture records God allowing kings and nations to fulfill his purposes of judgment of destruction of punishment even sometimes on his own people Israel but that does not mean ever that

God has a blind eye to their natural hatred or bloodlust or enjoyment of such a rule in Isaiah 14 for example we have a very good example we're clearly told that Assyria that terrible fearsome warlike nation was appointed by God to punish Israel recalcitrant wayward Israel but that doesn't mean that God's on Assyria's side of course not quite the opposite God says to Assyria this woe to the Assyrian the rod of my anger in whose hand is the club of my wrath I sent him against the godless

nation I dispatch him against the people who anger me to seize loot and snatch plunder and to trample them down like mud on the streets isn't that striking but God doesn't think therefore that Assyria is infallibly righteous he says this this is not what he intends Assyria that's not what he has in mind his purpose is to destroy to put an end to many nations so when God has accomplished his work of judgment he says this

I will punish the king of Assyria for the willful pride of his heart and the haughty look in his eyes for he says by the strength of my hand I have done this and by my wisdom because I have understanding I removed the boundaries of nations I plundered their treasures like a mighty one I subdued their kings as one reaches into a nest so my hand has reached for the wealth of nations as men gather abandoned eggs so I gathered all the countries not one flapped a wing or opened its mouth to chirp no you see God will not be put into the service of men or of nations now Isaiah 10 he says this does the axe raise itself above him who swings it or the saw boast against him who uses it as if a rod were to wield him who lifts it up or a club brandish him who is not wooed no that kind of arrogance and foolishness is an insult to the almighty God says this therefore the Lord the Lord Almighty will send a wasting disease upon his sturdy warriors under his pomp of fire will be kindled like a burning flame of course that's what happened to the proud and arrogant Syrian nation there's another illuminating instance on an individual level in the story in 2nd Kings 9 and 10 of Jehu where similarly God announced Jehu to be the purger of the house of Ahab and we're told that Jehu does what is right in God's eyes he accomplishes against Ahab's house all that God had minded to do yet we're also told that Jehu's motives of his own were far from just and Jehu himself doesn't escape therefore God's punishment read about it in the prophet Hosea and 2nd Kings chapter 15 tells us that the punishment of God came upon his household you see the message is that God is no man or nation's partner to fight on their side to bless the evil in their hearts and we totally delude ourselves if we ever allow us to think like that so we have to say to ourselves to Britain to America to Mr. Blair and Mr. Bush to all other western nations and leaders we must be humble we must realize that the strength of our hand may be mighty and yet at the same time a greater hand by far is over us a hand that demands mercy and justice and a humble walking before

God who is the only God we in the west and our governments must also fear the one who swings the axe it may be that at this present time we are to be the instrument of God's judgment on evil and on terrorism and this war on terror has many fronts but God also looks on the heart he looks on the motives and every hidden evil is exposed to his sight so may we all be sober people and politicians we must recognize as people that we have the politicians that we deserve and we must seek only righteousness and justice and we must seek it with reverence and with fear never with jingoism with pride with superiority with arrogance we must have a clear perspective on current world history and events fourth we must have a clear perspective on the goal of history the scriptures lead us to an even more fundamental and vital understanding of the authority that God has given to earthly powers the exercise of righteousness on God's behalf by the powers that be is not just a manifestation of his common grace not just a part of his care and providence for all creation ultimately all of this is focused on the center of God's plan all of it ultimately is focused on the progress of his kingdom the kingdom of his

[ 38 : 19 ] Christ and that means friends that peace and justice and freedom in the world much as we should pray for these things these things cannot alone be the most important concern of Christian believers even more important than protecting the right of people to live and worship in peace and freedom in fact overwhelmingly more important we must seek the opportunity to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to all peoples because we know that ultimately the issues are not just temporal but eternal Jesus says don't be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more fear him who after the killing of the body has power to throw you into hell behind all earthly issues are heavenly ones we can't ignore the fact that many of the issues surrounding the present crisis can only be explained ultimately by recourse to what scripture reveals to us about the unseen realm this fourth dimension the heavenly realms that's only visible by eyes opened by the spirit of God it's only there that we see with clarity it's only there that we see the nature of this real and present war that we are taken up in a war that's been going on from the very dawn of history and will rage until the very last day when Christ comes and all his enemies are finally destroyed it's the war against the lamb it's the war against his bride his church and that's why as Christians we know that the earthly expression of this heavenly conflict in all its ugly manifestation of evil and hatred will never be solved merely by earthly ends we know that although politics and diplomacy exercised by

the powers that be do have a role to play we know that ultimately these things can never succeed in bringing peace and freedom and justice to the earth never we know that because we know and at least we ought to know the infinite depths for the capacity of depravity in the human heart we of all people ought to know and understand the sinfulness of the human heart we know that the sinfulness of sin will never be solved at camp david or the g8 summit or the united nations that's a problem that meets its answer only in the cross of jesus christ only in the transformation that comes about through his gospel so although just punishment for acts of terror and renewed vigor in applying the rule of law in the world of course these are desirable things to curb sin to curb evil of course we must pray for these things and work for these things but we must understand that at best these things can only ever exert a negative function we can appeal to reasoned arguments to common decency to civilized values to a new world order to everything we like but none of that will ever change the heart of man scripture is quite clear the eyes of unbelievers are blinded by the prince of this world and that's true of every unbeliever in christ they are in implacable opposition to jesus that's all the more obvious in what we're currently seeing among fanatical islamists you can't reason you can't appeal to the higher nature with people who think that god rewards those who massacre innocent people they're not just dressing up their actions in religion these people actually think that these things flow directly out of their religious understanding they think what they're doing are acts of worship to god you can't reason people like with people like that nevertheless nevertheless the eyes of even such as these can be opened the hearts of even such as these can be changed but only through the miraculous opening the miraculous change that comes through the hearing of the gospel of jesus christ so our greatest prayer our greatest endeavor our greatest goal must be to bring the gospel of jesus christ to these kind of people all through the world all through the islamic world that's why paul enjoins us to pray for peace in the world in every part that's why he tells us to pray for kings and those in authority it's so that the gospel may go out and the word of christ may be heard and people's hearts may be changed when we pray for peace as christians we're praying for peace with a purpose and the purpose is the onward march of the gospel of the kingdom of jesus

christ that alone can and will transform this world fifth and finally we must have a clear perspective as believers on living as strangers in a strange land how are we as christians to view living in these days well above all we must be sane biblical realists it may well be that the cherished freedoms that we have in the west here as christians will have a way our leaders are secularists they think all religions are much the same and because they're determined to protect minorities it may be sooner than we think that we as christians have our freedom to proclaim the uniqueness of christ and the one way of salvation in him we may have that freedom removed because they may offend other people the legislation that's before parliament that i mentioned may very well be used and utilized to do exactly that in australia and the state of victoria already christian pastors have been imprisoned because they have claimed that islam is wrong and the way of jesus christ is the one true and only way of salvation they were prosecuted under laws which are less stringent than the laws that our parliament are about to enact there will be great pressure on us as christians believers and teachers it'll be all too easy won't it to demand silence from the preacher who simply preaches john chapter 14 verse 6 the second half no one comes to the father but by me we often hear just the first part of that verse i am the way the truth and the life but of course it's meaningless without the second half it only means something when we take the negative and the negative when it explained means that christ is the only way the unique way the exclusive way and that means that the way of muhammad the way of buddha the way of krishna is not the way of truth but the way of lies not the way of life but the way of death and this gospel is very offensive and christians committed to that gospel are also very offensive paul says we are the stench of death to those who are perishing so friends we need to ask ourselves this question are we prepared not to be silenced on the truth of the gospel whatever it costs us as our society becomes more hostile it's one of the ironies that the threat comes from militant islam but the likely outcome is suppression of orthodox christianity our brothers and sisters in places like pakistan and afghanistan and many many other places in the world not just islamic countries they're living with real physical threats to their lives and their livelihoods all the time we must pray for them we must pray that like daniel as a stranger in a strange land their hearts and minds will remain focused upon jesus christ and his gospel the living god on his purpose of salvation daniel remember faced that real personal danger but in the midst of it his prayer was still directed toward jerusalem toward the center of god's plan and purpose towards the kingdom of god progressing what about us well surely our own prayers at this time of

crisis must be directed towards the new jerusalem towards the heavenly jerusalem towards the coming of christ to the onward march of the kingdom of christ the gospel of christ as it's even now being extended throughout all the world through the mission of his gospel surely in our prayers and in our lives that goal must be the thing that dwarfs everything else the progress of the gospel of salvation from judgment to come surely that must be our goal the gospel you know is so much more so much more than things like making poverty history the new testament tells us the gospel is about making death history and sin history and guilt history forever and that gospel we must put above the threat of all earthly judgments even for our own physical safety certainly above our economic safety our cherished way of life and all of these things and who knows but that in his mercy God may use the current state of world events to jolt the church in the west out of our slumber people are coming to churches perhaps in greater numbers out of fear out of a sense of crisis we must pray that when they do come they hear not messages about politics or platitudes or fairy tales about peace and justice and working together for good we must pray that they'll hear instead the message of sure and certain eternal crisis that's going to face everyone without exception wherever you come from wherever your ethnic background that they'll hear of the pressing need for a saviour to save them from that judgment and that they'll hear of the gospel of the one and alone saviour

Jesus Christ who can and will offer forgiveness who will save them to the uttermost who trust in him that must be our prayer that must be our priority that must be our unflinching message whatever the cost be it economic or social or physical deprivation it's in this gospel of certain hope alone that we must stand but we can stand because we know the end revelation 17 14 says this they will make war against the lamb but the lamb will overcome them because he is lord of lords and king of him kings and with him will be his called chosen and faithful followers may it be our prayer that we are found to be such let us pray heavenly father there is so much in this world that we find hard to understand so many things to perplex us and bring fear into our hearts but we pray that you would direct our hearts always and only to the lord jesus christ to the onward march of his kingdom and to our place and our part in it and may we like daniel be fearless in the face of adversity because we know him who has called us and into his hands we can trust all things for jesus sake we ask amen