

Series: *Christmas 2010*

Title: "The Billboard at the Other End of the Tunnel"

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 1/2/2011

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Response to Our Last Broadcast

Dear friends, on today's broadcast we were scheduled to resume our series from the book of Colossians. But the events of this past week, and prayer about those events, has prompted me to change the schedule. The Lord willing, we will resume our study in Colossians next time. But today, I believe the Lord has made it clear that there is a pressing issue that I need to address on the broadcast before we move on.

In our last broadcast, we focused on the fact that during this past Christmas season, the American Atheists organization spent over \$20,000 to put up a huge billboard on one of the busiest highways in the New York City area, and the billboard proclaims that the Biblical account of the birth of Jesus Christ is not true. The billboard proclaims, "You KNOW It's a Myth. This Season, Celebrate REASON!" This billboard is located near the western entrance to the Lincoln Tunnel, which carries over 200,000 people into New York City every day.

On our last broadcast, I spoke of the fact that the atheists' billboard presents a version of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ that is a myth. Absolutely untrue. And in contrast, I focused your attention on the true account, the Biblical account, of Christ's coming into this world.

I also focused our attention on what the Bible says about the true nature of the atheist. I also focused our attention on the Christian's answer, the Bible's answer, the authoritative answer, to the false claims of those who claim to be godless.

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Now, there was a great deal of interest in that broadcast. In fact, it was one of our most-listened-to broadcasts ever.

A number of people who listened to the broadcast wrote to us, and several of them asked a question – the same question. They said, “Yes, we know about the atheist billboard at the western end of the Lincoln Tunnel. But did you know there is also a Catholic billboard at the other end of the Lincoln Tunnel that says, ‘You Know It’s Real. This Season, Celebrate Jesus’? And isn’t that a wonderful thing?” Well dear friends, I must tell you, with love and respect, that I disagree with you. It is not a good thing. And I say that not on my own authority. I could never do that. I say it on the authority of the Word of God.



Not Every Proclamation of “Jesus” is a Good Thing

Please listen to me carefully. I understand that the friends who wrote to us may think that *any* positive mention of Jesus and of Christmas is a good thing. And I’m sure that some of you who are listening to me right now would agree with that. And, I have no doubt that the dear people who hold this opinion are very sincere and well-meaning.

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But dear friends, we need to remember what the Bible says: Not every "Jesus" who receives public mention is the authentic Jesus. Not every "Jesus" whose name appears on a billboard is the authentic Jesus. Not every "Jesus" whose name is spoken from a pulpit is the authentic Jesus. Not every "Jesus" who is named on a radio or television program is the Christ of the Bible. Not everyone who names the name of Jesus is an authentic Christian.

Now, you may be asking, "How does this apply to these two billboards?" I want to answer that question today, and let me begin by saying this: At one end of the Lincoln Tunnel is the atheist billboard that proclaims myths about Jesus Christ. We exposed those myths in our last message. But at the other end of the Lincoln Tunnel is a Roman Catholic billboard – and because it is a Roman Catholic billboard, it also proclaims myths about Jesus Christ.

Roman Catholic Myths About the Christ of Christmas

What are those Roman Catholic myths? Well, we could devote a whole series of messages to the task of exposing the false teachings of Roman Catholicism about Christ, and about His coming into this world, and about the way of salvation. But time does not permit us to do that. But before I move on, let me mention this. If you visit our website, www.teachingtheword.org, you will find an entire section that deals with the false teachings of Roman Catholicism. You will find that in the area of our website called the Bible Knowledgebase. That's the Bible Knowledgebase at our website, teachingtheword.org. You can read the material online, and it's also

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available to download in printed form. I encourage you to have a look at that material, where we deal more comprehensively with the problems of Roman Catholicism.

But for today, let me just briefly mention some of the most essential things. On the Roman Catholic billboard is a picture of Mary, and Joseph, and Jesus with these words: "You Know It's Real. This Season, Celebrate Jesus. Merry Christmas from the Catholic League." What is it that the Roman Catholic Church says is "real" that is actually a myth?

Because of the limits of time today, I want to focus on one particular aspect of Roman Catholic false teaching, and that is Rome's false teaching concerning Jesus' mother Mary. I'm focusing on this because Roman Catholicism's false teachings about Mary lead directly to Roman Catholicism's doctrine of a false Christ. You cannot separate one from the other.

Here is the crux of that false teaching: Roman Catholicism teaches that Mary is the savior of sinners, along with Jesus Christ. Let me repeat that. Roman Catholicism teaches that Mary is the savior of sinners, along with Jesus Christ. Now, perhaps you have never heard that before, so let me explain.

Roman Catholicism teaches that Mary was born without original sin, just like Jesus. That is what Roman Catholicism means when it speaks of the doctrine of the "immaculate conception". It is not a reference to the conception of Jesus Christ, the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. The "immaculate conception" is a reference to the

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Roman Catholic doctrine of the sinless conception of Mary. Roman Catholic doctrine speaks – and I’m quoting them now – official Roman Catholic doctrine speaks of “the supernatural and godlike state” of Mary’s soul from the moment of her conception. “The supernatural and godlike state” of Mary’s soul.

Furthermore, Roman Catholicism teaches that Mary remained sinless throughout her life just as Jesus did. And beyond this, Roman Catholicism teaches that Mary did not die, but she was taken up into Heaven the same way Jesus was, and that Mary is also seated at the throne of God along with Jesus.

But the worst Roman Catholic myth of all, indeed the worst blasphemy of all, is this: Roman Catholicism teaches that Mary was involved along with Jesus in obtaining salvation for sinners at the cross. I’m quoting the Roman Catholic Encyclopedia again. They say this: “...in suffering with Him as He died on the cross, she cooperated in the work of the Savior, in an altogether singular way...to restore supernatural life to souls. As a result she is our Mother in the order of grace...For this reason, the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the [Roman Catholic] Church under the titles of Advocate... and Mediatrix.”

Many of you may remember the movie that came out a couple of years ago called *The Passion of the Christ*. It was produced by Mel Gibson, who is a staunch Roman Catholic. You may also remember that many undiscerning Evangelicals thought that this movie was a great thing, just as they think this Roman Catholic billboard in New York City is a great thing.

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But one of Mel Gibson's stated reasons for producing his motion picture, *The Passion of the Christ*, was to portray Mary as the Co-Redemptrix along with Jesus Christ. In the script Gibson put words in Mary's mouth and portrayed actions on her part that have no basis in Scripture. These things are based on Roman Catholic church tradition, which elevates Mary to the role of a co-savior along with Jesus. An official Vatican website spoke approvingly of Mel Gibson's portrayal. Again, I'm quoting. They said, "Mary [the] Co-Redemptrix has been given her first international film debut...and it's a hit."

The Word of Man, Not the Word of God

All of this – every last bit of it – is completely contrary to the Word of God. It is blasphemy against the true Christ. It is a denial of the one true Gospel. None of this has any basis at all in Holy Scripture. It is entirely based on the word of man, on Roman Catholic tradition, and not on the Word of God.

This is what happens when you add to, or take away from, the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God. Last time I quoted Proverbs chapter thirty, verses five and six, and I want to remind you of those words again today: "Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar."

And you know, dear friends, I want to mention one other thing that I believe is quite important. These false teachings of the Roman Catholic church are also the most grievous disservice to Mary herself. They are a disservice and an ongoing

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insult to this dear woman, who herself spoke of Jesus as her Savior, this dear woman Mary who was among the one hundred and twenty on the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter two. Mary herself received the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages of the marvelous works of God on behalf of sinners like herself. Mary is not the Co-Redemptrix that is portrayed by Roman Catholicism. Mary is a sinner saved by grace, saved by the shed blood of her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the authentic Christ of the Bible.

Jesus' Own Warning

Dear friends, we need to make sure that we have a firm grasp on the authentic Jesus and the authentic Gospel, the same grasp that Mary herself had, as Scripture makes clear. And we need to make sure that we never lose that grasp on the authentic Jesus, the authentic Way of salvation. We need to remember what Scripture says about these things. The Bible is full of warnings about this – warnings that are directed not only to unbelievers, but to believers – to us. Jesus himself said this, in Matthew chapter seven, beginning at verse thirteen:

Enter ye in at the strait gate [that is, the narrow gate]: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do

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men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 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? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

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And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

John's Warnings

The Apostle John gives this warning in 1st John chapter two, beginning at verse eighteen:

Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ [that is, the authentic Christ of Scripture]? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

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Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning...These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. (1 John 2:18-26)

The Apostle John gives this further warning, in 2nd John beginning at verse seven:

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, who do not confess [the authentic] Jesus Christ... This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds. (2 John 7-11)

Postmodern Evangelicals' Surrender of the Authentic Christ

You see, dear friends, this is a most serious matter. The Bible speaks of this in very clear terms. Terms of solemn warning: What Scripture plainly teaches about the identity of Jesus Christ, and the person and work of Jesus Christ, is absolutely non-negotiable. No compromise, no deviation from the truth, can be accepted or tolerated.

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But what do we have in our time? Dear friends, we live in an age when even some of our strongest Evangelical churches are coming under the influence of postmodernism. I spoke of this in a message from the book of Colossians chapter two, on a broadcast just a few weeks ago. We live in an age when the philosophy of postmodernism saturates our culture. Postmodern thinking is all around us, like the air we breathe.

And what does postmodern thinking say? It says that there is no such thing as propositional truth. It says that there is no such thing as objective truth. Postmodernism says that if you think that the Bible is the one and only source of truth about Jesus Christ, you are a fool. Postmodernism says that if you think that the words of the Bible have one and only one meaning – God the Holy Spirit's meaning – then you are intolerant. Postmodernism says that everybody can have his own truth.

And what happens when this kind of thinking comes into the church? I can tell you exactly what happens, because we see it all around us today. Churches begin to do things and to say things that reveal the fact that they have bought into postmodernism's way of thinking about the Bible and about Jesus Christ.

And this is what you begin to hear: "Oh, each of us can have our own way of thinking about these things. Your interpretation of the Bible can be different from my interpretation of the Bible. Your 'Jesus' can be somewhat different from my 'Jesus'. Your way to Heaven can be a bit different from my way to Heaven. The

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important thing is that all of us who call ourselves 'Christians' need to work together to improve society. Catholics, the mainline denominations, the Evangelicals, the Mormons – we just all need to work together for the common good. We need to work together to improve moral conditions. We need to work together to improve political conditions. We need to work together to fight against the evils of radical Islam." And so on.

That kind of thinking, that kind of spirit, is the basis of documents like the *Manhattan Declaration* that was issued a little over a year ago. That document was drafted and then signed by leaders from the Catholic church, liberal mainline groups, and even by some of the men who up until that point had been identified as some of the most conservative Evangelical preachers. Many of the men you hear preaching on religious radio stations every day, signed that document. Pastors, seminary presidents, leaders of many of the largest independent Evangelical ministries, signed this compromise document. And since then, nearly 500,000 people have signed it, following their example.

The *Manhattan Declaration* asserts that all of these people – the Roman Catholics, the Greek and Russian Orthodox, the mainline liberal denominations, the Mormons, and all who call themselves Evangelicals and Reformed – the *Manhattan Declaration* asserts that all of them are Christians, and that we all need to work together because – and I'm quoting now, we all "proclaim the same gospel," and we all "act together in obedience to the one true God".

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Dear friends, I declare to you on the authority of the Word of God, that this is absolutely wrong. This is Satan's lie. There is only one true God. There is only one true way of salvation. There is only one true Gospel. There is only one true Christ. The true Christ is not the Christ of Catholicism. The true Christ is not the Christ of the Orthodox churches. The true Christ is not the Christ of Mormonism. The true Christ is not the Christ of the liberal denominations.

And sad to say, the true Christ is not the "Christ" who is being proclaimed more and more by postmodern Evangelicals in our time. The true Christ is the Christ of Holy Scripture – and we dare not add a thing to it, or take anything away from it.

The Apostle Paul gave this warning to the Corinthian church. Second Corinthians chapter eleven, beginning at verse four:

For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted — you may well put up with it! (2 Corinthians 11:2-4)

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It Is Not Our Job to "Reclaim the Culture"

And that is exactly what is happening in Evangelical churches today. Postmodernism's influence has come into the church. The church has been corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. The Evangelical church is building its house on the sand. The Evangelical church is joining hands with those who proclaim another Jesus, a different spirit, and a different gospel – and more and more Evangelicals are saying, "That's alright. We need to do this in order to save society. We need to do this in order to reclaim the culture."

Dear friends, Jesus Christ did not put His people in this world into order to save society. He did not put His people in this world to prop up a world system that is under God's curse and is passing away. Jesus Christ put us in this world to prepare a people for the world to come. And those who are prepared for the world to come are those, and those only, who believe the one true Gospel of salvation from sin and from the wrath of God, through the person and work of the true Christ, and Him alone.

Peter writes this, in Second Peter chapter three, beginning at verse ten:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening

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the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells....You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked."

And all God's people said, "Amen".

About the Broadcast

The Scripture-Driven Church airs each week across the United States and around the world. Our goal is to preach the Gospel to the lost, and to equip believers to stand upon and live by the sole authority of God's Word, to the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The prayers of our listeners and supporters are vital to this ministry. Thank you for praying for us.

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of His inspired, infallible, inerrant Word.**