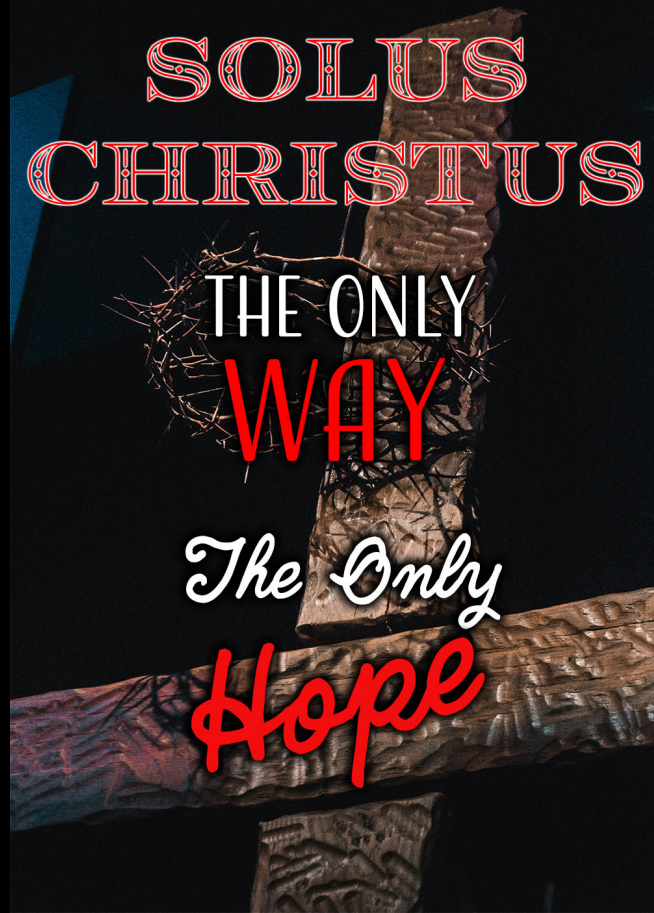


# *Theology for Life*

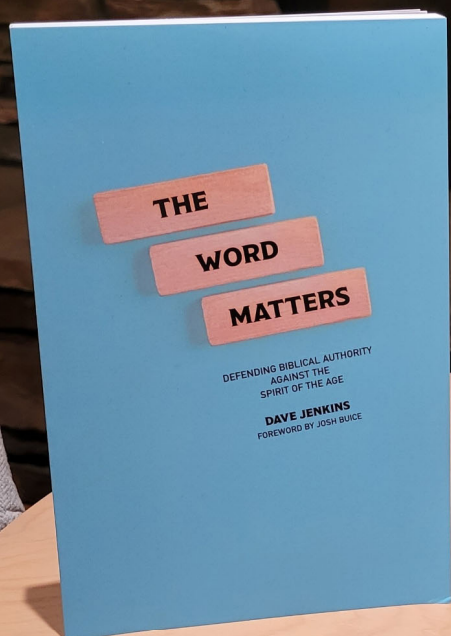
Volume 11 | Issue 4 | Winter 2024



## **Inside this Issue...**

- **Is the Exclusivity of Christ Unjust?**
- **Counted Righteous in Christ**
- **Jesus Christ: The Only Way**

In ***The Word Matters***, Dave Jenkins takes readers by the hand and helps them understand how serious the issue of biblical authority is and how the Bible is under attack, so that they can stand with confidence on the Word of God.



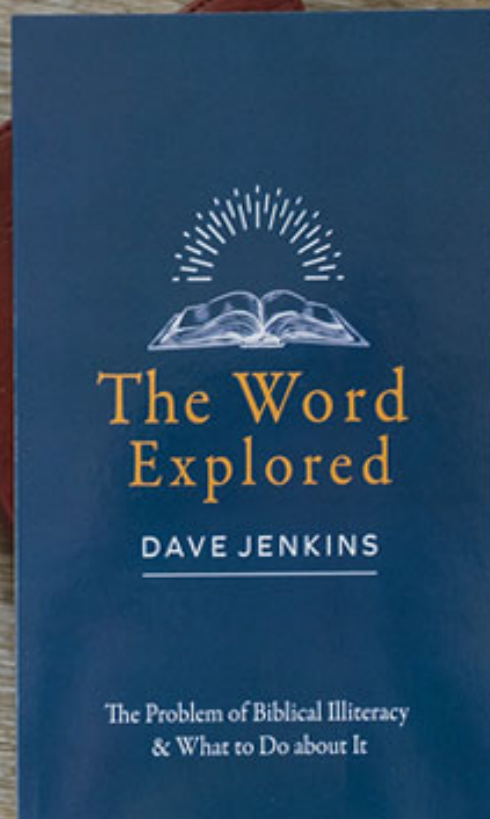
# The Word Matters

DEFENDING BIBLICAL AUTHORITY  
AGAINST THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE





**Grow in your relationship with God!**



*The Word Explored:  
The Problem of  
Biblical Illiteracy &  
What to Do about It*  
is an easy-to-read,  
biblically-based work  
for lay-people and  
pastors alike.

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## Editor's Corner

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**EXECUTIVE EDITOR***Dave Jenkins***CONTENT EDITOR***Sarah Jenkins***DESIGN DIRECTOR***Sarah Jenkins*  

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We are living in a day where it cannot be assumed that people believe in Christ Alone (a.k.a., the formal slogan of the Protestant Reformation known as *Solus Christus*, one of the “Five Solas”). From the challenges of the New Age to the New Apostolic Reformation, as well as the onslaught of a culture that says they believe in “truth” while also instructing Christians to “keep their faith private in their house”, we can no longer assume that people believe in an exclusive Christ. Further, we can no longer assume people understand that salvation is exclusive and restricted only to those who repent and believe in Christ alone.

From the days of Early Church until the Church of the present Day, it has been proclaimed that salvation is restricted and exclusive to only those who repent and believe in Christ alone. When preaching in the public square (Acts 4:12), the Apostles proclaimed that there is salvation only in Christ. They learned this doctrine from the lips of Jesus Himself, as they followed Him for three and a half years during His earthly ministry. In John 14:6, Jesus says that He is the only way, truth, and the life, and no man comes to the Father except through Him. Only in and by Christ alone can man have salvation. Jesus is the only Door, the only Mediator, and the rightful King.

We need to proclaim that Christ is the only way to God, whether we're at the kitchen table with family and friends, in our workplaces, or anywhere else. In a time when many people think that if they just do “good things” or “believe in God” that they will get to heaven, we must proclaim the truth of *Solus Christus*. Christ is the only way to God. Jesus is the only way to

enter into Heaven; it is through repentance and faith in Him alone.

*Solus Christus* not only matters in relation to our salvation and our proclamation of Him, but we must adorn our lives with the very gospel we profess to believe and proclaim to others. In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul told the Corinthians to imitate him as he followed Christ. According to 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, church elders must be biblically-qualified men; they must be examples of godly conduct to both the local church and community. The interesting thing about the qualifications for church elders is that they represent what a Christian should be. An elder is not a super Christian, they are to be a *model Christian*—a spiritually mature Christian exhibiting godly characteristics, worthy of imitation. Paul also said to the Ephesians that they are to walk in a worthy manner (Ephesians 5:1). This “worthy manner” is a life that honors God and consistently models Him in everything, which is why *Solus Christus* matters. Christ alone is not only necessary to pass through the door of salvation, but He is also utterly sufficient for all of life—including our times of suffering, seasons of plenty, and our trials.

The book of Hebrews conveys Old Testament illustrations and references by which one can see how and why *Solus Christus* matters. Christ is greater than everything; He is sufficient in and over all things. Hebrews was written to a church facing persecution and suffering. And while it was penned many years ago, it is still relevant today, because it reminds us that Christ is always enough, and His promises are yes and amen (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 1:20).

In this issue of *Theology for Life*, you will discover how and why Christ is not only the only way to salvation, but how He is sufficient in and over all of your life as a Christian. Turn the page now and join us as we consider this great theme and why we need to recover the centrality of *Solus Christus*. I pray that after you finish reading this issue that you’ll take up the cry of proclaiming Christ alone, not only in your evangelism and discipleship, but that your life would adorn this vital message for the glory of God.

In Christ Alone,  
Dave Jenkins  
Executive Editor, *Theology for Life Magazine*



# Jesus Christ: The Only Way

By Sarah Jenkins

**I have a confession to make...**  
**I am a sinner, just like every-**  
**one else on earth.** You might think, *Well, yeah...you're definitely not perfect!* And you'd be right. I'm not and never have been. But I have one thing that I cling to in my darkest moments—one thing that so many people, unfortunately, don't have—and that is that I've been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. So, I may have been a desperately sick and hate-filled soul once upon a time, but that is the case no longer. Now, I have Him—Jesus—and I am never looking back.

Let me tell you how it all went down. It started out with going to church (as many stories of salvation do), but unfortunately it was the *wrong*



church. Many of you may be wondering what I mean by “the wrong church”, so I’ll explain. My father’s family was raised in the Mormon (and Reorganized Latter-Day Saints) Church.

Our family wasn’t always Mormon—my grandfather started his family down that path when converted as a young man. He wrote in his journal that while he was in the U.S. Navy, he met someone who was from the Mormon Church. This man spent a lot of time teaching him about the doctrines of the LDS Church and, eventually, my grandfather caved to his way of thinking. He wrote [paraphrase], “I couldn’t bear the thought of my family members who had already died burning in Hell just because they never knew Jesus Christ, so I decided to join the LDS Church so I could baptize them into Heaven.” While sounding very noble, this way of thinking is completely unbiblical. Unfortunately for John Cram, however, he was not very biblically literate, and therefore didn’t realize that what his Navy friend told him was false.

This led to an entire lifetime of service in the LDS Church and eventually raising his children under these false doctrines. Now, you may be thinking, “How do you know they’re false and not true? Why are you so right and they’re wrong? You must be pretty arrogant to think that you know better than a whole group of people.” But here’s the thing...it’s *not* about what *I* think, but about what Scripture really teaches. Not sure you believe me? Well, let’s take a look at what the Bible actually teaches.

### Can Works Save People?

One of the most well-known teachings in the LDS Church is this doctrine: **“...[F]or we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” 2 Nephi 25:23.(i)** This means that Christ’s sacrifice isn’t enough. God’s grace for salvation isn’t applied to a person until they’ve done “all [they] can do”, in addition to believing in Jesus Christ. In Mormon doctrine, Jesus

Christ is not fully God and fully man, but a man born through God having intercourse with the virgin Mary. They believe in a weak, partially-divine, human man. (ii) And as such, we have to add our “good works” (all we can do) in order to be saved by God’s grace.

This, however, blatantly contradicts what the Bible teaches. Ephesians 2:8-9 specifically states, “*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that **not of yourselves**; it is the gift of God, **not of works**, lest anyone should boast.*” (iii) But if this verse alone isn’t enough to convince you that works mean nothing, let’s take a look at some other verses that support this idea.

- *“**Salvation is found in no one else**, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:31).*
- *Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. **No one comes to the Father except through me**” (John 14:6).*
- *“[H]e saved us, **not because of righteous things we had done**, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).*
- *“He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They replied, “**Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved**—you and your household.”” (Acts 16:30-33).*
- *“If you **declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved**. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is **with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved**” (Romans 10:9-10).*



- “[T]hough I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, **not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ**—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ— yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:4-11).
- “I will expose your righteousness **and your works, and they will not benefit you**” (Isaiah 57:12).
- “**Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him**, because he always lives to intercede for them” (Hebrews 7:25).
- “But we are all like an unclean thing, **and all our righteousness are like filthy rags**; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (Isaiah 64:6).(iv)

Every single verse above points to the fact that we can do *nothing* to “help” save ourselves. In fact, our efforts to do this are considered as “filthy

rag” (which by the way literally means used menstrual cloths in Hebrew). (v)

What this means for the Mormon doctrine is manifold: 1) you can’t “supplement” Jesus’ once-and-for-all sacrifice. You can’t add to it or in any way make it better. 2) You can’t baptize someone into Heaven. Not only is baptism *not*

**“Jesus cannot be *one* with God the Father and be a completely separate entity; it’s just not possible.”**

a means of salvation (as evidenced by the Thief on the Cross next to Jesus; see John Piper’s article for more information on this subject)(vi), but once a person is dead, they are beyond any human person’s reach for all eternity (which also means there’s no praying or paying their way out of “purgatory” either). Bottom line: works can’t save (or help save) anyone. Jesus doesn’t need or want our

“help”.

## Is Jesus Really Fully God and Fully Man?

If works do nothing to help us in our salvation, then the next questions to ask are: “Can Jesus really save me completely? Is He really fully God and Man?” The short answer to both questions is, “Yes!” Yes, He can fully save us; and yes, He is fully God and Man. There’s no question that Jesus was fully man, but what many people struggle with is His “*level of*” divinity. (Confused by this statement? Well, keep reading, I’ll explain.) As mentioned before, the LDS Church teaches that Jesus is *not fully divine*, but rather He was created by God physically having intercourse with Mary (thus making her *not* a virgin).(vii) They also teach that Lucifer and Jesus were created as brothers, which is also not at all a Biblical teaching.

The website *Got Questions* has a great article explaining this. Here is an excerpt with some of the key points:

“While Jesus is fully human, He is also fully divine. He claimed divine authority (Matthew 28:18), forgave sins (Mark 2:5–12), performed miracles (John 2:1–11), and accepted worship (Matthew 21:9). The New Testament describes Him as the eternal Word of God who became flesh (John 1:1, 14) and gives Him the title “Immanuel,” which means “God with us” (Matthew 1:23). The statement “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30) affirms Jesus’ divine nature, which includes omnipotence (Hebrews 1:1–4), omniscience (John 2:25), and perfection (2 Corinthians 5:21).”(viii)

Jesus cannot be *one* with God the Father and be a completely separate entity; it’s just not possible. Additionally, the *hypostatic union* (a term which encapsulates the dual nature of Jesus being both fully God and fully man) is evident in a multitude of places throughout Scripture—in both the Old and New Testaments.

This leads us to the concept of the Trinity. Since, Jesus and the Father *are one*, it can also be said that Jesus is part of the Godhead (Father, Spirit, Son). The below statements cited from Scripture testify to this unity between God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit, and also help us understand Jesus’ role/work as the “God-man”. And while these are just a few references, through these words one can see that Jesus is more than a mere man, sacrificed for all mankind:

- **He is our perfect mediator:** *“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus...”* (1 Timothy 2:5).
- **He possesses divine authority to redeem mankind from sin:** *“[J]ust as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many”* (Matthew 20:28).
- **He conquered death:** *“Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live””* (John



11:25).

- **He reconciled us to God:** *"For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross"* (Colossians 1:19-20).
- **He identifies with our struggles and sympathizes with our weaknesses:** *"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin"* (Hebrews 4:15).
- **He is the sacrificial Lamb for our sins:** *"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*" (John 1:29).
- **Through His life, death, resurrection, and ascension into Heaven, He has secured salvation for all who believe in Him:** *"[W]ho does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself"* (Hebrews 7:27).

Let's summarize this—if Jesus is who the Bible says He is, then He is indeed fully God and fully Man. He was born through the Virgin Mary, as Luke 1:35 says, *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God."* He was not conceived in Mary's womb by a physical act of intercourse, but rather a divine *overshadowing*. Mary was a virgin until *after* Jesus was born, at which point she became fully married to Joseph (in word and in deed) and gave birth to other sons and daughters by natural means (i.e., no longer a virgin, as the Catholic Church teaches).

And John 1:1 states that, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God...”* When we apply the fact that Jesus is “the Word” here, the statement John made becomes crystal clear—Jesus is God and has always been, since before the creation of the world.

## What About Other Religious Texts?

So now that we’ve established what the Bible says about Jesus, let’s circle back to the beginning of this article.

Let me continue where I left off in my personal testimony by admitting that it’s really easy to be deceived into believing false doctrine when you don’t know the truth as written in Scripture. It’s easy to think that you have some personal control over salvation, or at least have a hand in it in some way, when you don’t understand that it’s by grace alone, through faith

**“When you’re raised hearing specific doctrine taught, it’s hard to believe it’s anything but the full truth.”**

alone, in Christ alone. I was one such person for the majority of my youth. When you’re raised hearing specific doctrine taught, it’s hard to believe it’s anything but the full truth.

My dad started taking my family and me to the RLDS Church when I was about 8 or 9 years old. He’d been taught his whole life that the *Book of Mormon*, *Doctrine and Covenants*, and *The Pearl of Great Price* (among other texts) were on the same level as the Bible in their spiritual authority and significance. This led him to believe that everything taught by the LDS Church was true and not in any way contradictory to the Bible. And unfortunately, the LDS Church helped this belief along by altering the Bible and making it a requirement of church

membership that one may only ever read from the LDS Authorized King James Version of the Bible. And while there are other religious organizations that have done this also (such as the Jehovah's Witnesses), it's the LDS Church's manipulation of Scripture that personally impacted me.

The *Book of Mormon* makes a lot of fantastical claims with regards to its origination and legitimacy (ix), but there's one thing that specifically makes it false—it's contraction of the actual Bible (not the Mormon version, although it even contradicts that one too). The same can be said of every text that contradicts the Bible—they are false. Whether you're talking about the Apocrypha, *The Lost Gospel of Peter*, *The Book of Enoch*, *The Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, *The Treatise of Shem*, etc., each of these texts contradicts Scripture in some way (and often more than one). Often such texts are so blasphemous that it's hard to believe one could even consider them sacred at all (because they're not). We've already looked at the way in which official LDS doctrine contradicts Biblical teaching on Jesus, salvation, and works. Now let's take a look at some of the other ways it contradicts Scripture.

**“And Jesus’ teachings on Heaven were also different from what Mormonism had taught me.”**

When my dad died, and I started attending a different church with the purpose of carpooling to 4-H events afterwards, I started noticing subtle differences that piled up over time. The pastor at my friend's church preached many sermons on a variety of things, and I started to notice the distinct, yet very specific, differences between LDS doctrine and true, biblically accurate doctrine. One thing that immediately stuck out to me were the conflicting teachings on the subjects of Heaven and Hell. I remember one Sunday I sat listening to a sermon and was shocked by how different the Bible spoke of our existence after the

death of our physical bodies. The Mormon Church had taught me that there is a Hell—meant for only the murderers (x) and really bad people (xi); and then there's Heaven—with different levels therein. There's the level for non-Mormons, those that are generally "good" people (Telestial Kingdom); then there's the level of Heaven for "jack-Mormons" (those who are Mormon, but not really practicing) called the Terrestrial Kingdom; then there's the level of Heaven for those who are fully-practicing, righteous Mormons (Celestial Kingdom). Only people that have a "temple wedding" and follow all the commands of the Mormon Church (such as abstaining from caffeine/other drugs and having as many babies as possible to provide bodies for "spirits waiting to be born in Heaven") are able to enter the 3<sup>rd</sup> level of Heaven.(xii) Oh, and those that are perfect on both Earth and in Heaven eventually obtain godhood (xiii) and become the "exalted" (xiv) , creating worlds and populations, ruling over them as gods/goddesses.(xv)

But what the Bible says about the afterlife, as I found out, was very different. Jesus Himself spoke of Hell and judgement very often. Some of the things that Jesus said rattled me. "Jesus taught that hell is a real place where some beings will spend eternity (Matthew 23:33, 25:41; Mark 9:43). In Jesus' teaching, hell is not figurative or symbolic; it is a real place in which real experiences take place. Jesus portrayed hell with vivid imagery concerning fire and darkness (Matthew 5:22; 8:8–12)."(xvi)

And Jesus' teachings on Heaven were also different from what Mormonism had taught me. Here are some examples from Scripture that clearly demonstrate that there is real place called Heaven (with only one "level" where people dwell with the Lord) and not everyone (regardless of whether they're "good" or not) will enter into it:

- **Matthew 7:21** - *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in*

heaven.”

- **Matthew 10:32** – *“Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.”*
- **Matthew 23:9** – *“Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.”*
- **Mark 13:32** – *“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”*
- **Matthew 6:19-20** – *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.”*
- **John 5:25-29** - *“Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.”*
- **Matthew 13:47-50** - *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*
- **Revelation 21:2-5** - *“And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming*



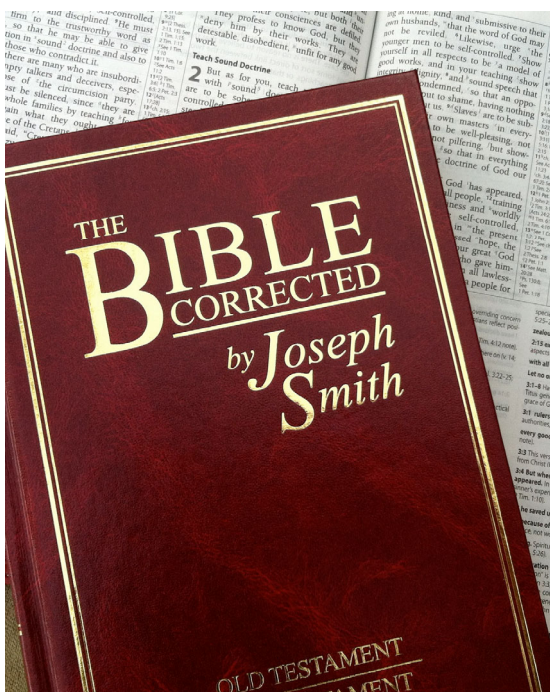
down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.' "And he who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.'"

- **Revelation 21:22-23** - "And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb."

One thing I also noticed while reading the Bible is that the New Jerusalem ("Zion") was not to be established in Jackson County, Missouri, as Mormonism teaches. Joseph Smith taught that the "saints" were to start building New Jerusalem in Missouri, but according to the Bible, it will be lowered down from Heaven (built by God Himself) once the old Earth and old Heaven have passed away (Revelation 21:1).

## A Transformed Life

As I stumbled over absorbing this information for the first time, it occurred to me that if one part of the doctrine taught by the LDS Church was wrong, there was a chance that there were other false teachings embedded therein. This was the prompting I needed to research fur-



ther...and that's when God led me to the truth, the only truth, and nothing but the truth: His Word.

The more I read the Bible, the more I began to understand just how biblically illiterate I was, and how false the teachings of Mormonism truly are. I found that Jesus is the only Way, the only Truth, the only Life, and no one comes to the Father (enters Heaven) except through Him. I found that the "Jesus" of Mormonism is a false god. He's not at all like the one spoken of in the Bible. The Mormon Jesus' lack of deity/godhood makes him useless to fully save anyone, making his "sacrifice" worthless.

I found that the Jesus of the Bible is the only one able to save, because of His perfect life, sacrificial death on our behalf (for our sins), resurrection from the dead, and ascension into Heaven, where He sits at the right hand of the Father. I found that nothing I did could help me be saved and my works were as filthy rags in the eyes of a perfect and holy God. I found that only Jesus' blood could ever cleanse me from my own filthiness. I found that without Jesus' work on the Cross, I was doomed to live apart from God for all eternity, and that it was only by His Grace that I was saved from eternal damnation.

I found that it is through faith in Jesus Christ alone (and His death on my behalf) that I am saved, sanctified, made a new creation in Him, and will one day enter Heaven to live with Him forever. And I found that His love of me (and the rest of mankind) was what made all of this possible, even from before the foundation of the World (John 3:16).

### **What was (and still is) true for me, is true for you too.**

You can have everlasting life with Jesus as your Savior. It's so simple that even a child can understand. All you have to do is put your faith and trust in Him and His work for you on the cross. It was *on the cross* that Jesus shed His blood and made atonement for mankind. It was through that sacrifice that your sins (along

with mine) can be completely forgiven and cast as far away as the east is from the west! And it's by His grace alone that you (and I) have been given the chance to hear the gospel and believe. So...repent and believe in Him! Believe that everything the Bible says about Him is 100% truth. Believe that He did everything that needs to be done. Believe that it's enough for you to live for all eternity with Him. Believe that He IS the Son of God who takes away the sins of the world...because He is. If you've never put your faith, hope, and trust in Him, today is the day and *now* is the moment! Don't delay another second!

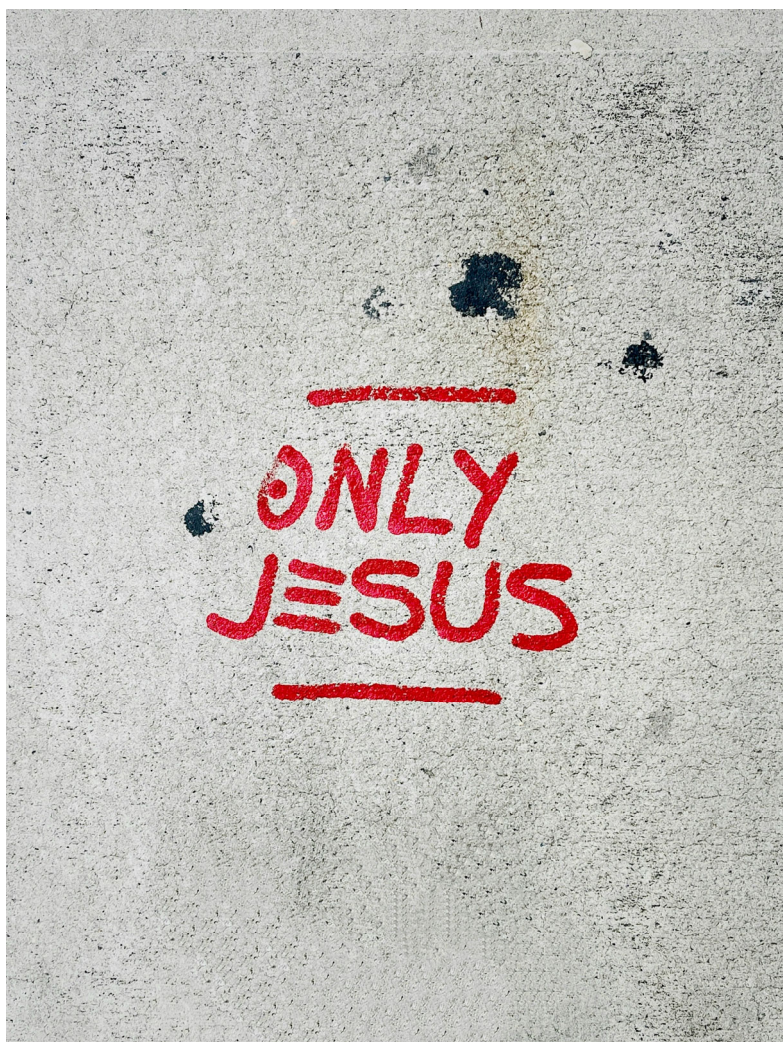
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## Christ Alone: Faith

By Aimee Joseph



I first learned the *Five Solas* of the Reformation in college, only a few years after coming to know

**Christ:** *Sola Fide* (Faith Alone), *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture Alone), *Solus Christus* (Christ Alone), *Sola Gratia* (Grace Alone), *Soli Deo Gloria* (Glory to God Alone). As someone who was not raised in the Church and with zero biblical knowledge, I soaked them in like a sponge, as they concisely captured the true path to salvation. Twenty-plus years later, I am learning that Christ Alone offers not only the way to salvation, but also the path to true freedom. In a

culture replete with idols that loudly overpromise and consistently underdeliver, the clarion cry of *Solus Christus* offers both salvation through Christ alone and satisfaction *in* Christ alone. Orthodoxy (right doctrine) ought to always lead to orthopraxy (right living/right practice). We cannot love what we do not know, but our knowing should always shape our living.

### Orthodoxy: Learning Christ Alone

Christ's disciples were "*uneducated, common men*" whose chief distinction was they "*they had been with Jesus*" (Acts 4:13). When looking for the simplest definition of complex truths, I like to start with these simple men who were utterly transformed by the good news of the gospel. Peter and James, newly sealed by the indwelling Spirit, were brought before authorities and religious experts to answer for the miraculous healing of a lame man. The intimidating authorities asked them, "*By what power or by what name did you do this?*" Their response offers clear yet compelling insight into what the Reformers later termed *Solus Christus*.

*"Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved"* (Acts 4: 10–12).

### No Other Savior

The Reformation merely uncovered gospel realities that had been mired and buried by man. Salvation through faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ alone has always been the cry of the church! Hidden in these few verses, we see the Incarnation of Christ (Jesus Christ of Nazareth: a real man born to real mother living in a real time and place), the crucifixion of Christ, and the res-



urrection of Christ as the way of salvation. The disciples were clear that man's salvation rested solely upon the person and work of Christ. Filled with the Spirit, Peter boldly stood upon Christ alone for salvation (Acts 4:7). Peter did not preach a salvation of Christ plus additional works; rather, he offered the completed work of Christ as the path to salvation.

### No Other Mediator

While the disciples offer us a quick glance into Christ alone, the concept of Christ Alone can be traced throughout the entirety of the Scriptures. Long before the Second Person of the Trinity be-

came Incarnate to mediate between God and man, Job longed for such a mediator:

"For he is not a man, as I am, that I might answer him, that we should come to trail together. There is no arbiter between us, who might lay his hand on us both" (Job 9: 32–33). Through faith, Job understood that man could not save

**"Our mouths may confess quickly, but aligning our lives to the great reality of Christ alone will take a lifetime."**

himself—salvation necessitated a perfect mediator who was both God and man. Only through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, who is fully man and fully God, can sinful mankind have access to a holy God.

Paul picks up this same thread of thinking on the other side of the cross, when writing to his protégé, Timothy: "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time" (1 Timothy 2: 5–6).

Christ alone means there is one mediator between God and man: Jesus Christ. We need no other intermediary, no other intercessor, no other good

works. We rest our salvation and our hope solely on the completed work of the Savior.

## No Other Name

When Peter told the authorities “There is no other name,” he meant so much more than our modern minds comprehend. The concept of name means much less to us now than it did to people in the first century. Name implies much more than a collection of letters attached to an email or a sticky nametag. To them, name meant the collection of the power, authority, the character, and the essence of the person named. When writing to the Philippians, the Apostle Paul expounded on the salvation offered us in Christ, who, though being in very nature God, emptied himself and took on the form of a servant (Philippians 2:6–7). He goes on to talk about the power in the name of Jesus Christ:

*“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9–11).*

There is one Savior, one mediator, one name through whom men can be saved. One day, every tongue will confess, and every knee will bow before Christ alone. As believers, we would do well to practice now what we will be doing for all eternity!

## Orthopraxy: Living Christ Alone

Our mouths may confess quickly, but aligning our lives to the great reality of Christ alone will take a lifetime. While it may be easy to rattle off the five *Solas* of the Reformation, it is much more difficult to wrap our lives around them. Living by faith alone in a largely materialist culture that only trusts what it can taste, see, feel, or measure takes the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and ongoing effort in the fight of faith (1 Timothy 6: 12). Living by grace alone in a cul-

ture that enthrones self and swears by grit and grind requires both humility and a sobriety toward self. Living through Christ alone in a culture that clings to countless idols requires constant repentance and realignment. The world says, “By self alone through self alone to self alone,” and the flesh gladly follows along; however, believers in Christ sing and march to a very different tune: “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen” (Romans 11: 36).

We learn to live by Christ alone when we can say with David, “I say to the Lord, ‘You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you’” (Psalm 16: 2). We learn to live to Christ alone when we say with the psalmist, “Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory!” (Psalm 115: 1). We learn to live by Christ alone when we begin to obey through abiding (John 15: 5).

**Those who live by Christ alone can be carefully doing good works without depending upon them for salvation.**

Those who live satisfied in Christ alone can find contentment in poverty or riches, in feast or fallow (Philippians 4:11–13).

## ***Solus Christus* Throughout Church History: A Doctrine Beyond the Reformation**

**By Richard Moore**



***“Solus Christus”*** (“Christ alone”) is one of the *Five Solas* and pillars of **Reformation theology**, which asserts that salvation is obtained through Christ alone, and that no other mediator is necessary nor permissible. This teaching emphasizes Christ’s propitiatory atoning work on the cross as the singular means by which man attains peace with God and is saved from His wrath (Romans 5:8-9; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 1 Thessalonians 5:9-19; John 3:36; Ephesians 2:3-5; Colossians 3:5-6).

The Reformers emphasized this doctrine in their challenge to the Roman Catholic Church’s teaching

on the mediation of the Church, the saints, and the sacraments. However, *Solus Christus* is not unique to the Reformation. The centrality of Christ in salvation has been a consistent teaching throughout Church history. We will trace its roots beginning in the New Testament teaching of the Apostles, clearly seen in the early Church, continuing through the medieval period, recovered in the Reformation, and faithfully passed down to us to this day. This article will demonstrate that the concept of Christ as the sole mediator and the only means of salvation, has deep roots in the Christian tradition—from the teaching of the Apostles through the early Church fathers, medieval theologians, the Reformers and into our current times—and consequently is (and should remain) an indispensable core teaching of the Church for all time.

## **The Early Church and the Centrality of Christ in Salvation**

One cannot look solely at Church history to understand what the Church has taught through the millennia without first looking at the Apostles' teachings. The Apostles' teachings are the foundation of the Church, with Christ being the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20). Accordingly, it is imperative, while doing a historical systematic theological examination, to first begin with the Apostles' teachings. The doctrine of *Solus Christus* has its foundation in the New Testament, where the uniqueness of Christ as the sole mediator of salvation is affirmed. One of the clearest biblical statements is found in Acts 4:12, where the Apostle Peter declares before the Sanhedrin, "*There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*" Peter later affirms the centrality of Christ's atoning work in his epistle. "*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed*" (1 Peter 2:24).

Paul, the Apostle, reiterated Peter's Christocentric message apart from initial contact with Peter or the other Apostles. Paul's description of how he re-



ceived his gospel message is clearly laid out in Galatians 1:11-24. He describes that it was directly God-given, not delivered to him by any man. He describes that he had no contact with the other Apostles and went immediately into Arabia and did not consult with anyone. After three years, he went to Jerusalem to visit Cephas (Peter). At that time, he had no other contact with the Apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

Paul gives these facts as a defense to show that Christ Himself delivered to Paul his Christocentric message, which was the same gospel that Peter, James, and the other Apostles were preaching. This little detail helps us understand that *Solus Christus* is the foundation stone of the Apostles' teachings, even to the Apostle Paul, who was "untimely born". And what was Paul's gospel? *"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"* (1 Timothy 2:5). He also talks of the preeminence and eternality of Christ and His peacemaking duties on the cross in Colossians 1. He further elucidates Christ and His wrath-bearing justification in Romans 5:8-9. These few portions of Paul's writings display that his gospel, apart from the other Apostles' influence, was the same Christocentric gospel as theirs.

**"John, the Beloved Apostle,  
taught this Christocentric  
gospel..."**

The other Apostles also taught *Solus Christus*. John, the Beloved Apostle, taught this Christocentric gospel when he wrote in his epistle, *"And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his son. Whoever has the son has life; whoever does not have the son of God does not have life"* (1 John 5:11-12). John only receives and preaches this gospel of Christ and His singular atoning work because he received it from Christ Himself. John records it in his gospel. In John

14:6, Christ claims His exclusivity in salvation, and John records a similar message in Revelation, that Christ is the firstborn from the dead, the ruler of the kings of the earth, and has freed us from our sins by His blood (Revelation 1:5).

James, the brother of Christ, while not so explicitly preaching *Solus Christus* like Peter, Paul, and John, does it implicitly in his letter on Christian living. He says, *“Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls”* (James 1:21). The implication here is that Christian doctrine (i.e., the word, which is Christ), as expressed in John 1:1-14, can save your souls. James further expounds on who Christ is in chapter 2, verse 1, when he calls Jesus Christ the *“Lord of glory”*.

Another Apostle, Jude, also echoes *Solus Christus* when he wrote his beautiful doxology. *“Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen”* (Jude 1:24-25). Here, Jude acknowledges Jesus Christ as the only means through which believers are presented blameless be-

**“Polycarp, an elderly man, who was reported to be 86 years old, was arrested by Roman authorities for refusing to renounce Christ.”**

fore God, and he attributes salvation to God through Christ alone. He also gives glory to Jesus Christ, saying that majesty, dominion, and authority before all time now and forever belong to Christ. This is a direct reference to the eternality of Jesus Christ. Thus, in Jude’s mind, Jesus is able to be a successful intermediary because He is the eternal God. That is why he as-

cribes to Him salvation and eternal glory in the same doxology.

The Church Fathers inherited this Christocentric understanding of salvation from the Apostles and developed it further in the face of various theological

and corporeal persecutions. Many paid the ultimate sacrifice for their *Solus Christus* teaching. Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35–107 A.D.), a bishop and martyr, emphasized the necessity of Christ in his letters to various Christian communities. In his letter to the Ephesians, he writes, “For our God, Jesus Christ, was conceived by Mary according to God's dispensation, of the seed of David, and of the Holy Spirit; He was born and baptized that by His passion He might purify the water of baptism to the washing away of sin” (*Epistle to the Ephesians*, 18). Ignatius speaks directly to the sufficiency of Christ's passion for the forgiveness of sins, reflecting the early Church's clear understanding of Christ as the only way to be reconciled with God.

Another Church Father and martyr, Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, is thought to be a direct disciple of the Beloved Apostle, John the Revelator. The theology of *Solus Christus* can be seen clearly in his life and teaching, but I would like to highlight his martyrdom in which his words of faithfulness to Christ show the dedication to that message.

Polycarp, an elderly man, who was reported to be 86 years old, was arrested by Roman authorities for refusing to renounce Christ. After his refusal to renounce Christ, he was brought into the arena and sentenced to be burned at the stake. After the flames did not consume his body and being unharmed by the flames, the executioners ultimately stabbed him with a dagger to complete the execution. Before he was executed, Polycarp was commanded to renounce Christ. Polycarp's famous declaration of fealty to Christ shows how dedicated he was to Him and the saving power of his cross. He said, “Eighty and six years have I served him, and he has done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my king and my savior?” (*Polycarp's Epistle to the Philipppians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp: Introduction, Text, and Commentary*, 253).

Another Church Father, Justin Martyr (c. 100–165 A.D.), also upheld the uniqueness of Christ in salvation, particularly in his dialogue with the Jewish

scholar Trypho. Justin contended that the Mosaic Law, though important in the history of salvation, was insufficient to save. He argues that the sacrifices of the Old Covenant pointed forward to Christ, the true and final Lamb of God. He writes, “The blood of the lambs offered in sacrifice could not take away sins, but this was a type of the true Lamb, Jesus Christ, who was offered as a sacrifice once for all” (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 40). Justin’s Christ-centered understanding of atonement underscores that from the earliest period, the Church viewed Christ as the fulfillment of salvation history, not merely a part of it.

The most prominent defender of the centrality of Christ in the early Church was Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 296–373 A.D.). In his classic work *On the Incarnation*, Athanasius fought against the Arian heresy, which denied the full divinity of Christ. Athanasius argued that only the full divinity of Christ could account for the salvation of humanity.

He writes, “He was made man that we might be made God; and He manifested Himself by a body that we might receive the idea of the unseen Father” (*On the Incarnation*, 54). For Athanasius, Christ’s incarnation and atoning work were not supplementary but essential for salvation. Only God Himself, in the person of Christ, could redeem humanity from sin and death. Athanasius paid a high price because of his defense of Christ and His divinity, for which he was exiled five times for 17 years. He became known as *Athanasius Contra Mundum* (Latin for “Athanasius Against the World”) because of his bold stance against Arianism at all costs. His ardent defense of Christ’s divinity and, thus—in principle—his defense of *Solus Christus*, makes him one of the key figures in the development of *Solus Christus*.

Athanasius was integral in the writing of the Nicene Creed. And although the Nicene Creed was written to address other issues, namely Trinitarianism and Christology (Christ’s divinity) contraposed to the Arians, it certainly communicates a *Solus Christus* perspective when it describes Christ, “Who because of us

men and because of our salvation came down,” (*The Creeds of Christendom*, 215-216). This succinct phrase found in the creed describes the reason for Christ’s incarnation: “because of our salvation”. Here, we have more evidence of Athanasius’ fingerprints slowly forming *Solus Christus* through the early Church.

Augustine of Hippo (354–430 A.D.), one of the most influential theologians in the early Church, also emphasized the centrality of Christ in salvation. In his work *The City of God*, Augustine affirms that “there is no other mediator between God and men than the man Christ Jesus” (Book 9, chapter 15). He argues that no human works, merit, or ecclesiastical interventions can substitute for Christ’s saving work. St. Augustine consistently taught *Solus Christus*—that salvation comes through Christ alone—in his theological writings, sermons, and pastoral letters. Whether in works like *The City of God*, *On Nature and Grace*, or *Enchiridion*, Augustine emphasized that Christ is the only mediator between God and humanity, and that salvation cannot be achieved through human effort or any other intermediary. His defense against heresies such as Pelagianism further solidified his teaching that only through Christ’s grace can humanity be saved. In Augustine’s theology, the grace of God—mediated through Christ alone—was the decisive factor in salvation, building the foundation for many of the Reformers, who would all call on Augustine and his work for guidance.

## **The Medieval Period and Christ’s Role in Salvation**

In the medieval period, the development of the sacramental system and the growing authority of the Papacy seemed to obscure the clarity of *Solus Christus*. However, many prominent medieval theologians continued to emphasize the necessity of Christ’s unique role in salvation. Although we saw *Solus Christus* in the Medieval period “*through a glass dimly*” (1 Corinthians 13:12), it was still visible.

Just as God saved a remnant of 7,000 in Elijah’s day who had not bowed



the knee to Baal, God also saved a remnant of theologians who were still preaching the exclusivity of Christ in salvation during the Medieval period. One of those who saw *Solus Christus* “through a glass dimly” was Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109 A.D.). He articulated one of the most important medieval defenses of Christ’s atonement in his work *Cur Deus Homo* (“Why God Became Man”).

Anselm developed what has come to be known as the “satisfaction theory of atonement”, which holds that only a being who is both fully God and fully man could satisfy the debt humanity owes to God for sin. Anselm writes, “No one but God can make this satisfaction, and no one but man ought to make it; hence it is necessary for a God-Man to make it” (*Cur*

**“Drawing from the works of John Wycliffe, Huss rejected the ecclesiastical abuses of his time...”**

*Deus Homo*, II, 6). Anselm’s argument makes it clear that Christ’s work on the cross is not only necessary, but sufficient for the salvation of humanity. Anselm’s arguments were a few more of the building blocks laid for future generations like John Calvin.

Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274 A.D.), perhaps the most significant theologian of the Middle Ages, also upheld the centrality of Christ’s atoning work in his magnum opus, the *Summa Theologica*. Aquinas explains that Christ’s death was the perfect sacrifice, satisfying divine justice and providing the basis for humanity’s reconciliation with God.

He writes, “Christ’s Passion is the cause of the remission of sins, through which man is reconciled to God” (*Summa Theologica*, III, Q.48, A.1). Although Aquinas also emphasized the importance of the sacraments, he viewed them as the means by which the grace of Christ’s sacrifice is applied to believers, not as

additional works that contribute to salvation. Christ's work on the cross remained the foundation of his soteriology.

Throughout the medieval period, other theologians and mystics also pointed to the sufficiency of Christ in salvation. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153 A.D.), a Cistercian monk and mystic, emphasized the love of Christ and the centrality of His death for the believer's union with God. In his sermons on the Song of Songs, Bernard stresses the importance of Christ's redemptive work, saying, "The death of Christ is sufficient for all, but it is applied only to those who believe" (*Sermons on the Song of Songs*, Sermon 61). His understanding of salvation echoes the later Reformation principle of *Solus Christus*. Although *Solus Christus* in the Medieval period became more and more cloudy through the falsification of Christ's mediatory work alone, it was seen "through a glass dimly" by many, which the pre-reformers like Jan Huss carried on with boldness.

## **The Building Blocks of *Solus Christus* in Pre-Reformation Thought**

Jan Huss (1372–1415 A.D.), a precursor to the Reformation, also taught the doctrine of *Solus Christus*, emphasizing Christ as the sole mediator between God and humanity. Drawing from the works of John Wycliffe, Huss rejected the ecclesiastical abuses of his time, particularly the authority of the Pope and the Church hierarchy, advocating instead that salvation could be found only through Christ.

In his treatise *De Ecclesia* ("On the Church"), Huss declared that "Christ is the only head of the Church" and that no human intermediary, including the pope, could claim such authority over the Church or believers' salvation (Huss, *De Ecclesia*, Chapter 6). Huss further argued that the merit of Christ's sacrifice was fully sufficient for the forgiveness of sins, without the need for indulgences

or the intervention of the clergy. His Christocentric theology, which prefigured the Reformation's emphasis on *Solus Christus*, ultimately led to his condemnation as a heretic by the Council of Constance and his martyrdom in 1415 A.D.

Before the event of Huss's martyrdom at the stake, he turned to his executioners and said, "Today you burn a goose (Huss), but in one hundred years a swan will arise which you will prove unable to boil or roast." Later, Martin Luther understood Huss' word and embraced the idea that he was the swan that God had raised him up to continue his work in *Solus Christus*. Scholars have recognized Huss' theological alignment with Reformation principles, noting his role in preparing the way for the later Reformers, particularly in his focus on the sufficiency of Christ's atoning work (Fudge, 2010).

### **The Reformation and the Reassertion of *Solus Christus***

By the time of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, the emphasis on the Church's role in salvation, including the intercession of saints, indulgences, and the sacramental system, had become more pronounced. The Reformers responded by returning to the early Church's emphasis on the sufficiency of Christ's work for salvation. Martin Luther (1483–1546 A.D.) was the leading voice in reasserting *Solus Christus* during the Reformation. Luther's theology of justification by faith alone (*Sola Fide*) was based on his understanding of Christ's exclusive role in salvation. In his Heidelberg Disputation (1518 A.D.), Luther famously declared, "The cross alone is our theology," emphasizing that it is the work of Christ, not the Church, that saves. He rejected the idea that the Church or its sacraments could add anything to Christ's finished work on the cross. Luther's return to the primacy of Christ is perhaps most clearly seen in his rejection of the practice of indulgences, where he argued that only Christ's merit, not the merits of the saints or the Church, could atone for sin.

John Calvin (1509–1564 A.D.), another key Reformer, also championed the

doctrine of *Solus Christus*. In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin emphasized that Christ alone is the mediator between God and man. He writes, “We see that our whole salvation and all its parts are comprehended in Christ. We should therefore take care not to derive the least portion of it from anywhere else” (*Institutes*, II.16.19). For Calvin, any attempt to find salvation in the works of the law, human merit, or ecclesiastical authorities was a direct affront to Christ’s sufficiency.

The doctrine of *Solus Christus* was enshrined in the major confessions of the Reformation, including the *Augsburg Confession* (1530 A.D.) and *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647 A.D.). *The Westminster Confession* states, “The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself, which He through the eternal Spirit once offered up unto God, has fully satisfied the justice of His Father; and purchased not only reconciliation but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father has given unto Him” (Chapter 8, Article 5). This confession leaves no room for human merit or additional mediators in the process of salvation and encapsulates the Reformers’ conviction that Christ alone is sufficient for salvation, a teaching that we have seen has been established in Christian theology from its earliest days.

## **The Persistence of *Solus Christus* in Post-Reformation Theology**

The emphasis on *Solus Christus* did not fade after the Reformation. For instance, in the Puritan tradition, figures like John Owen (1616–1683 A.D.) echoed these themes. Owen’s treatise, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, is an extended meditation on the completeness of Christ’s atonement. Owen argues that Christ’s death alone is sufficient for the salvation of His people and that it is efficacious for all for whom it was intended. He states, “Christ died for all the

sins of all the elect, and paid their full ransom price, securing for them reconciliation with God” (*The Death of Death*, Book 3).

Owen’s theology, like that of the Reformers, reaffirms that Christ alone is the basis of salvation. Later on, Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758 A.D.) displayed throughout the breath of his teaching, a deeply Christocentric theology. For instance, his most famous sermon, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, demonstrated *Solus Christus*, wherein he said, “There is no other mediator but Christ who is sufficient to stand between a holy and just God and sinful man, to atone for sins and to purchase redemption.”

Not only is the emphasis on Christ alone seen throughout Church history and reestablished during the Reformation and on through post-reformation thought, but there is a resurgence even now in reformation thought and the sufficiency of Christ and Christ alone for salvation (*Solus Christus*). We are seeing this in the works of current Church leaders, such as John Piper, D.A. Carson, Sinclair Ferguson, Paul Washer, Ligon Duncan, Kevin DeYoung, and many other contemporaries. The concept of *Solus Christus* is not being lost on this generation, but rather it is being strengthened through this reformed resurgence.

## **Conclusion: *Solus Christus* and Christ’s Cross is the Whole Counsel of God**

The doctrine of *Solus Christus* was not a novelty introduced by the Reformers, but a consistent teaching throughout Church history—from the early Church fathers, such as Ignatius, Justin Martyr, and Athanasius, to medieval theologians like Anselm. The emphasis with which all of Church leadership—starting with the Apostles, Church fathers, theologians, historians, and continuing with present-day pastors—has placed on the sufficiency and singularity of Christ’s atoning and intermediary work on the cross, illustrates and defends the importance that all Christians should likewise place on this singular work, which Christ has undertaken on our behalf.



There is a temptation in modern ministry and church life to place an emphasis on other things, apart from the sole propitiatory atoning work of Christ. Emphasizing any other work (i.e., our own good works or our own striving to please a holy God) is a fool's errand. The emphasis that all of Church history places on Christ's work alone instructs that we may not step out of line with this belief and teaching that is based on scripture.

We may not be so arrogant as to get out of step with all of Church history in the singularity of Christ's propitiatory atoning work. We must take care in all of protestant and evangelical Christianity not to present other means by which man may be reconciled to God in our teaching. The temptation is to think we are smarter or wiser, or have evolved into a smarter and more robust theology. It is

**"I would leave you with the most concise and challenging words on this topic from J.C. Ryle..."**

folly. If we believe or teach that man may be reconciled to God through other means or other mediators, we are teaching people how to enter into a Christless eternity; for as Paul taught us, "*there is one mediator between God and men the man, Christ Jesus*" (1 Timothy 2:5).

If we teach anything else, we err greatly and may in fact jeopardize the eternal destiny of those we teach. Dear Pastor, Elder, Lay Leader, or any other Church Leader, please teach and focus on the centrality of Christ, Him crucified, and coming again, and thus you will "*save yourself and your hearers*" (1 Timothy 4:16).

I would leave you with the most concise and challenging words on this topic from J.C. Ryle, who also wrote on the cross of Christ and its singularly powerful work. He said in his book, *The Cross Crucified with Christ, and Christ Alive in Me*, "Depend upon the cross of Christ, the death of Christ on the cross to

make atonement for sinners—that is the central truth in the whole Bible” (*The Cross Crucified with Christ, and Christ Alive in Me*, Kindle Location 154). Ryle further elucidated that Christ and Him crucified must be the centerpiece of our evangelism and missions when he wrote:

“The cross is the secret of the missionary success. Nothing but this has ever moved the hearts of the heathen. As the cross has been lifted up, missions have prospered. This is the weapon that has won victories over hearts of every kind in every quarter of the globe: Greenlanders, Africans, South Sea Islanders, Hindus, and Chinese have all felt its power” (*The Cross Crucified with Christ, and Christ Alive in Me*, Kindle Location 321).

In conclusion, Scripture, Church fathers, and all of Church history confirms that the whole council of God is embodied in His son, Jesus Christ; and the forgiveness of sins that can be found only in Christ and Christ alone. Books and volumes could be written on this subject because it has been a consistent and constant theme of Church history that Christ, our Savior, and Lord, has given Himself in our place for our sins so that man may have peace with God through His sacrificial blood. The church bells of history have continually been ringing out with this message.

Jesus, Lord of all, has not counted “*equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*” (Philippians 2:6-11). May this message of Christ’s sufficient mediatory work continue to ring out

throughout all of history. May it ring out into eternity in Christ alone, our hope is found.

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# Is the Exclusivity of Christ Unjust?

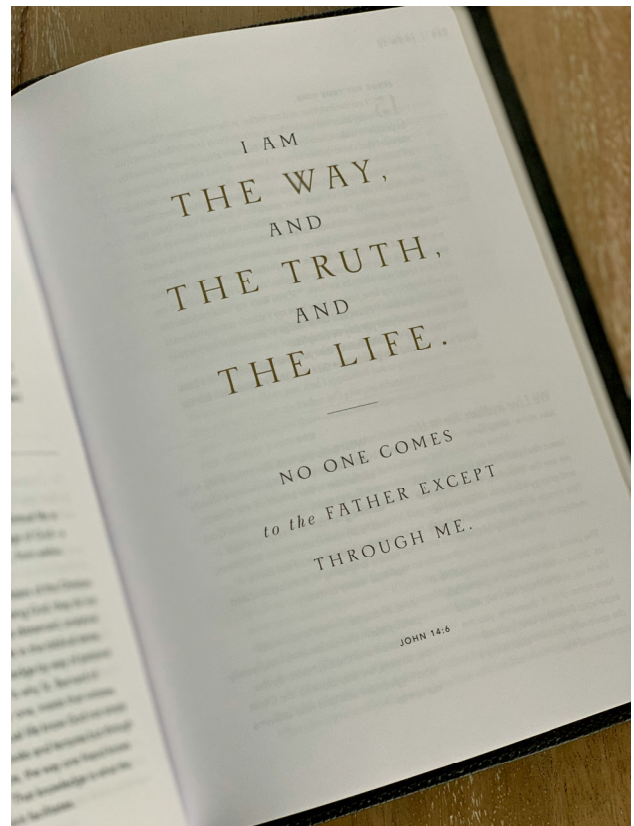
By Dave de Bruyn

**“How can you suggest that Jesus is the *only* way to salvation? That's so narrow-minded and intolerant!”** Undoubtedly many Christians have heard some version of that statement as they've attempted to share the gospel. How do Christians answer this objection to *Solus Christus* (“Christ alone”)?

## Exclusivity of Christ: A Definition

The exclusivity of Christ is the belief that salvation is possible only through personal faith in Jesus, which arises through hearing the gospel through a human agent.

(i) Other terms for this exclusivism are *particularism* (salvation is particularized in Jesus Christ) and *restrictivism* (salvation is restricted to those who exercise faith in Christ). Several well-known Scriptures make conscious belief in Christ necessary for salvation and emphasize the exclu-



sivity of Christ as *the* way of salvation.

- *“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18).*
- *“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36).*
- *“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”” (John 14:6).*
- *“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).*
- *“And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:11–12).*

The idea that salvation is restricted to those who exercise faith in Christ is one of the strongest arguments for evangelism and foreign missions. If natural revelation and non-Christian religions contain enough truth to save, then the urgency and importance of missions is greatly lessened.

*“How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!” But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?” So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:14–17).*

## **The Exclusivity of Christ: A Defense**

Why should salvation be exclusively through Jesus Christ? This notion is



sometimes called “the scandal of particularism”. In a pluralistic world, many regard it as offensive and scandalous to suggest that Christ is the only way. Since it is such a stumbling block to many, what is the Bible's explanation for this exclusivity?

The short answer is that exclusivism is required because of the Incarnation. The Incarnation, in turn, is required because of the nature of our sin debt. For man to be reconciled to God, man's sin must be dealt with, and God's just demands must be satisfied. Sin must be punished, and more specifically, sinners must be punished. If a substitute were to take that punishment on behalf of sinner, he would have to be a true, human-born man. However, since the debt of offending God is infinite, only a man of infinite strength could handle the punishment of God, and only a man of infinite worth could satisfy God's righteous demands. Only God is of infinite worth, and of infinite strength, therefore the substitute cannot be solely a creation of God, for nothing created is infinite. The substitute must be the God-Man.

There has been only one God-Man, and there can have been only one God-Man. Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son, who added to Himself a true human nature in the virgin birth, was and is the God-Man. He is the only way, because no one else could achieve atonement. *“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus”* (1 Timothy 2:5).

Once God has become man (which Christ did), all debate over the relative truth of religions is over. If the Creator becomes man, that event is automatically the center of religious truth. And since Christianity insists that only God could atone for man's sin, and that God became man in Christ, it logically claims that Christ is the only way.

Paul even suggests in his preaching to the pagan Greeks in Athens that the Incarnation has put an end to fuzzy thinking about ultimate questions, and God

now demands a universal believing response to the Risen Christ.

*“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.” (Acts 17:30–31)*

In the time from Adam to Christ, special revelation increased, and consequently, the content of saving faith increased in its specificity and clarity. Paul often refers to progressive revelation, when speaking of the mysteries that were once hidden but are now revealed. Certainly, the Incarnation represents the pinnacle of revelation (Hebrews 1:1-2), and therefore we should expect the content and particularity of special revelation to reach its climax in Christ.

**“While many can see the logic behind the exclusivity of salvation through faith in Christ, they nevertheless regard it as an unfair demand by God.”**

## Is it Unjust?

While many can see the logic behind the exclusivity of salvation through faith in Christ, they nevertheless regard it as an unfair demand by God. This objection does not usually have to do with the Incarnation and the Atonement, but with the requisite knowledge to believe on Christ. Objectors state that if faith in Christ is the only means of salvation, it appears to be an unfair demand upon those who have never heard of Christ. How can God withhold knowledge, and then judge us for what we did not know?

The answer to this objection is that while knowledge of Christ is requisite to salvation, men are not condemned for ignorance of Christ. They are con-

demned for rejection of the knowledge God has given them.

**“In Christian history, people who would be otherwise classed as exclusivists have held to this doctrine.”**

All mankind is given light and truth. This comes through the witness of creation (Psalms 19; Romans 1:19-20), conscience (Romans 2:15), and providence (Acts 14:17). This is known as general or natural revelation. General revelation is too vague to reveal the identity of God fully (or give a moral system or disclose redemption). God's special revelation is needed to rightly interpret

natural revelation and avoid idolatry. General revelation is necessary, but not sufficient. However, there is enough knowledge in general revelation to indict a man for rejecting his personal, moral, beautiful, and holy Creator. Guilt is proportionate to knowledge, and exclusivists hold that general revelation is enough to condemn the soul, but not enough to save.

The human race must be seen in light of its native aversion to truth. Its willingness to believe lies, suppress truth, and refuse inconvenient facts shows that the problem of unbelief would not be solved by adding more detailed facts about Christ, or by exposing all people to exactly equal amounts of revelation. Imagine that natural revelation is nine-tenths of the light we need before we receive the essential last tenth of special revelation. If we have rejected 90% of the light God gives us, is God obligated to give the last 10%?

This condemnation also implies there is also enough knowledge in general revelation to have prompted further seeking, so as to be led to special revelation. This is the doctrine of *universal sending* held by some exclusivists: those who seek light will receive more light.

In Christian history, people who would be otherwise classed as exclusivists have held to this doctrine. This was widely discussed during the Middle Ages, and held by people like Peter of Abelard, Bonaventure, and Dante. It was later held by Jacob Arminius. It is the notion that if someone seriously seeks after God, then God will see to it that he/she receives the message of the gospel in some way. The Ethiopian eunuch was seeking, and God sent him Philip. Cornelius was seeking, and God sent him Peter. The Magi were seeking, and God led them to Jerusalem and to the Scriptures. People who respond to the light they have by approaching it receive more light.

For those who never hear the Gospel, their situation must be analogous to people from Adam to Christ, who had varying degrees of exposure to special revelation. General revelation has made them culpable. They are still required to repent and believe in what God has revealed to them. As R. C. Sproul once said, "If a person in a remote area has never heard of Christ, he will not be punished for that. What he will be punished for is the rejection of the Father of whom he has heard and for the disobedience to the law that is written in his heart."

The basis of salvation for all men, of all times, is the atonement of Jesus Christ. The means of salvation is God's grace through faith, and since the Incarnation, that faith is to be placed exclusively in Jesus Christ. God alone knows how much light each individual has received, and how culpable and accountable he or she is. With Abraham, we can ask and answer affirmatively, "*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*" (Genesis 18:25).

**Endnotes:**

- i. Or by reading the Bible (although, they still need spiritual guidance after conversion, which is why they need to attend church under a biblically-qualified, male pastor).

## **Christ Alone and the New Apostolic Reformation**

**By Dawn Hill**



**One of my favorite songs that I heard as a new believer**



**in Christ years ago was “In Christ Alone”.** I remember singing the words and thinking about what it meant to trust in Him and His salvation and redemption. One of my favorite verses in this song is the final verse:

“No guilt in life, no fear in death,  
This is the power of Christ in me.  
From life's first cry, to final breath,  
Jesus commands my destiny.  
No power of hell, no scheme of man,  
Can ever pluck me from His hand.  
Till He returns or calls me home,  
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.”

At that time, I did not have a deeper understanding, or even a deeper sense of gratitude and thankfulness, in what Christ had done for me, and it would be a short period of time after answering a salvific call at a Christian rally that I would spend nearly the next two decades entrenched in what I would come to understand was the “Word of Faith” and the “New Apostolic Reformation”.

There have been times where I have wondered if I was a true convert in the beginning, and though I have questions, I rest in the fact that the Lord has done a work within me. He has forgiven me and has granted me repentance and deliverance out of this deception. His Word assures us that no one can snatch us out of His hand (John 10:27-29). Now, coming back to that song (In Christ Alone) years later, the words have a much sweeter meaning and a deep well of thankfulness has been plumbed in my heart to rest in Him alone.

It may seem strange to think that a fast-growing movement, such as the New Apostolic Reformation, is not rich with the sufficiency of Christ alone. One well-known leader in this movement's circles has stated that those who oppose

the “move of God” in the Charismatic movement are jealous because they have larger churches, more passionate music, and the display of spiritual gifts. It is worth noting that this leader denies the existence of the New Apostolic Reformation and believes that those who express concern and address the teachings of modern “apostles” and “prophets” are bitter and jealous, but I believe that a fair question to pose within this movement pertains to the lack of resting in the sufficiency of Christ alone.

What is the best way to explain the time spent in the hyper charismatic/ New Apostolic Reformation pertaining to this matter? One thing that I have heard proponents say about those who question practices and teachings in this movement is that critics are without any spiritual experiences. In other words, they oppose what they have not encountered. But, as I have spoken to others who have exited this movement, we share a common analogy to the never-ending restlessness found cloaked in hyper-pseudo spirituality. It is likened to a hamster on a wheel, running in one direction, but never truly advancing anywhere. There is a heightened focus on dreams, visions, and hearing God for yourself. Gifts are said to be activated by “anointed leaders”, so as long as you serve them, honor them, and submit to them, God will grant your desires and fulfill your destiny.

**“We do not get into God’s good  
graces by anything that we can  
do.”**

Conferences are viewed as being close to those anointed leaders in hopes that you will have a prophetic word released over you, and that you will encounter God in a more powerful way than you did at last year’s conference. Fire tunnels are popular in some circles, with spiritually hungry individuals travel-

ing down an aisle while people on either side lay hands on them as a form of impartation of the anointing of God.

People are encouraged to pray in tongues, bind the devil, and decree and declare any matter so that it can be established eisegetically. The hamster wheel is made up of these things and more, and if you just keep doing these things, then you will ascend to greater heights in the spirit. If you do these things, then you will do “greater things” than Jesus Christ. The tragic truth is that none of this rests in the sufficiency of Christ, and the gospel is sadly looked upon as a steppingstone rather than the cornerstone.

It is only after being pulled from the hamster wheel that you begin to see the deception. While you’re doing these things, you believe as the hamster does, *I’m going places*. But what you soon find is that these things keep you distracted from the truth of God’s Word and the power of His gospel, which comes back to the five Solas noted in the Protestant Reformation and ultimately, Scripture. One of those *Five Solas* is *Solus Christus*, Christ alone. It affirms that through the atoning work of Christ alone are we granted salvation. John 14:6 affirms by the very words of Jesus Christ that He is the only way to the Father. There is no other mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5). We are not saved by any merit of our own, and we are saved for good works, not *by* them.

We do not get into God’s good graces by anything that we can do. We do not control the anointing, which is found in all believers, as the Holy Spirit indwells those who believe. We do not need to work ourselves up into a frenzy to get God to move, and He is certainly not dependent upon us. Rather, He is self-sufficient. It is us who are in need of Him, which should daily bring us back to resting in Him alone for salvation, redemption, adoption, and eternal life.

Though I do believe that there are genuine believers within the New Apostolic Reformation who have been deceived, I have great concern that many are

false converts and have not heard the true gospel according to Scripture, because they strive in vain to rest in the sufficiency of their own works and their own perceived power rather than in the sufficiency of Christ.

There is peace and comfort that comes in resting in the sufficiency of God's work, and this peace and hope comes in Christ alone. There is great peace in resting in His grace alone, by faith alone, to the glory of God alone. And there is a peace surpassing all our understanding in the sufficiency of Scripture alone for life and godliness. My hope is that many more will be plucked out of this movement, and the Lord alone is faithful to do so. When we set our gaze upon Him, and we marvel at what He has done for us rather than the greatness we want to perceive in and of ourselves, everything else pales in comparison to His glory and splendor. Rest in Christ alone, dear Christian, and He will give you rest for your soul.

## Counted Righteous in Christ

By Joshua Mills



In his poem, *When This Passing World is Done*, Robert Murray M'Cheyne penned a beautiful stanza that magnified the glory of being counted as righteous in Jesus Christ. In it, M'Cheyne writes:



“When I stand before the throne  
Dressed in beauty not my own,  
When I see Thee as Thou art,  
Love Thee with unsinching heart;  
Then, Lord, shall I fully know,  
Not till then, how much I owe.”

Dear Christian, do you know that the moment you believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ you were counted righteous in Him? At the heart of the gospel is the doctrine of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Justification by faith alone, in Christ alone, is the only means by which sinful men can be reconciled to a Holy God. Without this doctrine, we have no Christianity. The aim of this article is to briefly show you that a sinner is only justified when God the Father, based upon the work of Jesus Christ in their place, declares them to be righteous upon the exercise of the gift of faith. The grounds of our justification before God are solely in the person and work of Jesus Christ, and His righteousness is only accredited to us by faith alone. To set this before you, we will briefly consider both the Old Testament and New Testament.

## **The Old Testament's Witness**

First, to begin we must understand that a key text for understanding justification by faith alone is found in Genesis 15. When the Apostles in the New Testament set before us the glorious doctrine of being counted righteous in Christ by faith alone, they did so by expounding God's gracious dealings with Abraham.

In Genesis 15:5, God brought Abraham outside and said, *“Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.”* Then he said to him, *“So shall your offspring be.”* The response of Abraham was as such, *“And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness”* (Genesis 15:6). This passage forms the foundation of our understanding of justification by faith in the

New Testament. In this text, we see the words “*believed*”, “*counted*”, and “*righteousness*”.

For starters, we must first understand what it means for Abraham to believe God. The text says, “*he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness*” (Genesis 15:6). It is important to recognize that Genesis 15 concludes the first section of the Abrahamic narrative. It does so by providing the dual themes of dynasty (Genesis 15:2-4) and dominion (Genesis 15:7-8), which was set before us in both Genesis 3:15 and Genesis 12:1ff. Therefore, in verses 2-6, God addresses the dynasty issue regarding the promised seed, which echoes the promise of the Saviour in Genesis 3:15. In the text, God turns Abraham’s focus toward the heavens and shows him that the innumerable stars represent his countless children (Genesis 15:4-6).

As a result, Abraham believed the promise of God concerning the promised Christ, who will reverse the curse of sin and death. He believed that the promised offspring would come through his line and that all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him. Palmer Robertson writes, “Abraham declared his ‘Amen’ to the promise of God, and God reckoned his faith in the stead of righteousness.” It was because of Abraham’s faith in the promises of God that God “*counted it to him as righteousness*” (Genesis 15:6).

To see the significance of this, we must recognize the surrounding context of Genesis 15. Abraham was counted righteous in the promised Christ by faith alone, and this occurred prior to both the rite of circumcision (Genesis 17) and the Mosaic Law. This shows us that obedience to the law can never give you the righteousness needed to stand before a Holy God. Isaac Watts puts it this way:

“The best obedience of my hands  
Dares not appear before Thy throne;  
But faith can answer Thy demands  
By pleading what my Lord has done.”

The text (Genesis 15:6) goes on to say that God “*counted it to him as righteousness*.” Palmer Robertson argues that this means that it is “a righteousness that does not inherently belong to him.” In other words, this righteousness is outside of Abraham. Several different Old Testament passages indicate that a person can be “reckoned” or “regarded” as something that he himself is not (Genesis 31:15; Numbers 18:27, 30; Leviticus 7:18). Therefore, in Genesis 15:6, Abraham is counted as righteous, though he himself is unrighteous.

A proper understanding of Genesis 15 smashes the false argumentation that Abraham played any part in achieving this righteousness of God. It was not a consequence of his life of obedience. It was not Abraham’s faith in the promised Christ, plus his faithfulness to Christ. After years of loyal service, it is only Abraham’s faith in the promised Christ that counted him righteous before God, not his obedience. Though a guilty sinner, Abraham was declared righteous in God’s sight by faith alone in Christ alone. This becomes more evident in the Apostolic witness to Genesis 15.

## **The New Testament’s Witness**

In this final section, we will now look at Paul’s usage of Genesis 15:6. The goal of this section is to gain a better understanding of the God who counts sinners as righteous in Christ.

## **The Letter to the Romans**

First, I want to begin in the book of Romans. In Romans 4:1-8, Paul provides believers with an extended interpretation of Genesis 15:6. In this text, Paul addresses the implications of boasting: “*For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God*” (Romans 4:2). If Abraham was justified by works, then he would have something to boast about before man. But since he was not justified by works, he has no reason to boast. His boastings must be solely in the cross of Jesus Christ. The conclusion drawn from Romans 4 is that Jews and Gentiles can only be justified by faith alone, in Christ alone:

*“And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness” (Romans 4:5).*

## The Letter to the Galatians

Additionally, in Galatians 3 the Apostle Paul uses Genesis 15:6 to show that the Gentiles are now also recipients of God’s blessing by faith alone, in Christ alone. Paul writes, *“And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed’”* (Galatians 3:8, ESV).

**“Therefore, the New Testament makes it clear that no one can be righteous before God on their own account or merit.”**

First, Paul argues that the justification of the Gentiles is the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham, that all nations would be blessed through his seed. Paul argues that the divine promise made to Abraham finds its ultimate fulfilment in Jesus Christ.

Paul writes, *“in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith”* (Galatians 3:14). Therefore, Paul affirms that “it is only through faith in Jesus Christ, the ‘seed’ of Abraham, that Jews and Gentiles may now receive the blessing given to Abraham and become God’s children.”

Therefore, the New Testament makes it clear that no one can be righteous before God on their own account or merit. Paul writes in Romans 3:10, *“None is righteous, no, not one.”* Again, *“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). The Bible is crystal clear that we are only *“justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith”* (Romans 3:24-25). The law could never make anyone righteous. Rather, the law should show us our inadequacies

and drive us to the Lord Jesus Christ. This needed righteousness comes only through believing, not by working. Any sense of boasting is eliminated. God receives all the glory for salvation.

### **Concluding Implications**

As we conclude, we must ask why should we glory in the fact that we are counted righteous in Christ? What are the implications for those who have looked to Jesus Christ by faith alone to save them from their sins and the wrath to come? Wayne Grudem wonderfully defines justification as the following: “justification is an instantaneous legal act of God in which he (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ’s righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight.” Thus, justification is God’s declaration that we, though guilty sinners deserving judgment, are righteous in His sight. Put another way, justification deals with our legal proceedings before God. God declares us to be just in His sight (i.e., forgiving past, present, and future sins). However, this moral neutrality of sins forgiven is not enough. There must be a “positive righteousness before God, the righteousness of a life of perfect obedience to him.” God can only declare a sinner to be just because He imputes Christ’s righteousness to us. What an astonishing thought! The Lord Jesus’ righteousness is “imputed to the believer, and the believer’s sins are imputed to Christ, who bears them in His body on the tree.”

**Oh, beloved Christian, with this in mind, may you daily sing that wonderful hymn, “*My Hope is Built on Nothing Less*”:**

“My hope is built on nothing less  
than Jesus’ blood and righteousness;  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,  
but wholly lean on Jesus’ name...”



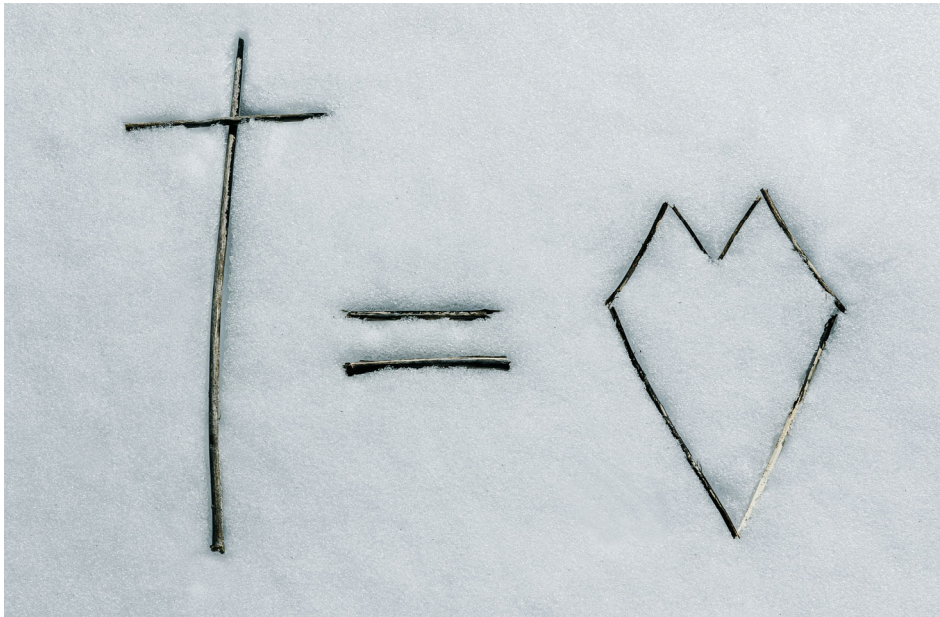
When he shall come with trumpet sound,  
O may I then in him be found:  
dressed in his righteousness alone,  
faultless to stand before the throne.”

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## The Dangers of Misunderstanding *Solus* *Christus*

By Michael Schultz



**“[Many] who sit before pulpits have been given a steady diet of Jesus Christ without a context in theology.** A listener might get the impression that faith in Christ had replaced faith in God.”

The Protestant Reformation produced many good effects, not the least of which are the great quotes! How can we possibly forget such quotes as “Here I stand, I can do no other” or “The human heart is an idol factory” or “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes!” But above these quotes hang even more important formulations of doctrine which have echoed through the halls of the Protestant Church for half a millennium now — *Sola Gratia*, *Sola Fide*, *Solus Christus*, *Soli Deo Gloria*, and *Sola Scriptura*. I personally remember these as one creedal statement:

“Salvation is by *grace alone*, through *faith alone*, in *Christ alone*, for the *glory of God alone*, on the authority of the *Scriptures alone*.”

It is somewhat well-known what the dangers are of misunderstanding some of these elements. Belief that salvation comes by grace alone is good and wise, but to misunderstand this sometimes has led to an anti-missional spirit, because Christians have come to believe that God’s grace *alone* will save, regardless of whether they evangelize or not. Other times, individuals misunderstanding what it means that salvation is by *faith alone* have ventured into antinomianism, believing that if one has faith then that faith alone is the grounds and evidence of salvation, regardless of the life and other beliefs of the person holding such faith. These issues have been handled historically, but only *now* are Christians beginning to engage with an equally difficult error—a misunderstanding of salvation in Christ alone. This misunderstanding, much like those which have gone before, can have an impact on both the left and right wings of culture, as will be explained in this article.

### **Left-Wing Dangers of Misunderstanding *Solus Christus***

In the aftermath of liberal theological developments, pouring from beneath the pens of scholars such as Rudolf Bultmann and company in the early-to-mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a new group of Christians arose which focused largely on the social elements of the gospel. These individuals, perhaps best represented by Harry Emerson Fosdick, de-emphasized the place of doctrine and theology proper. They instead worked (effectively to their credit) to advance what they considered Gospel-oriented social causes, such as women’s rights, common-sense child labor laws, or later on, civil rights.

To maintain credibility in a largely Christian culture, these individuals could not simply appeal to the good nature of their constituents. They had to link their actions to Jesus Christ and God’s will. So, they developed a useful tool that we might call the “spirit of Jesus”. That is to say, even if Jesus never explicitly

said, “Women should have the right to vote”, they would contend that it was something Jesus *would say*, if you are familiar with the “spirit of Jesus”. In this

**“Such an error can occur only because these individuals have jointly misunderstood the doctrine of *Solus Christus* and ignored the other doctrines, such as *Sola Scriptura*.”**

context, the “spirit of Jesus” has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit (as Paul used the phrase in Philippians 1:19). Rather, this “spirit of Jesus” that they referred to would be more like one who gives money to a poor man on December 25<sup>th</sup>, saying he is doing it in “the spirit of Christmas”.

These individuals advocating for a social gospel believed they were channeling the true essence of who Jesus was and what Jesus would do. Indeed, it was during this time that the phrase “What Would Jesus Do?” (WWJD) came into the mainstream. But as they focused more and more on what Jesus *would do*, they focused less and less on what Jesus *did*. As they theorized about what Jesus *would say*, they focused less and less on what Jesus *said*. As they focused more and more on who Jesus *would be* today, they forgot who Jesus *was*.

Thus, by the time you got to the mid-to-late 1900s, a person could say, “That’s not very Christ-like” even when referring to something Biblical, such as Church discipline (which finds its very grounds in the command of Jesus). Today, anyone doing any form of public evangelism will almost certainly be identified by the modern American culture as unlike Jesus, because (they will say) “Jesus loved everyone and never condemned anyone.” Some will even say things like “Jesus wasn’t religious, He was spiritual.” While they may have enough of a continued sense of Christianity to deny that salvation is found in other religions, they soften so much of the gospel that they may even say such

things as, “Jesus will accept the efforts of unsaved people who do the best they can with the light they have. Even if they believe in Mohammad or Buddha, he will forgive them as if they were believing in him. All paths lead to Jesus, and he is forgiving and accepting of all.” Thus, they will argue, salvation is still in *Christ alone*.

At the root of this problem is actually a serious misunderstanding of *Solus Christus*. These individuals believe wholeheartedly in Jesus Christ. The problem is that the “Jesus Christ” they believe in is imaginary and has been formulated head-to-toe by their own desires. He is a “Jesus” who shares nothing in common with the true, historical Jesus of the Bible, except perhaps His compassion for the poor, sick, or outcast. His justice is entirely gone. His holiness, His religiousness, His gravity and severity—all of this has been thrown to the wind because those elements, in the mind of these left-leaning individuals, are “not in the *spirit* of Jesus.”

Such an error can occur only because these individuals have jointly misunderstood the doctrine of *Solus Christus* and ignored the other doctrines, such as *Sola Scriptura*. Their faith and belief in “Christ alone” are worth nothing, because the Christ in whom they believe is not the Christ who has the power to save—He is a figment of their imaginations.

Although He is the ultimate source of salvation, all paths lead to Him (contrary to what the Bible would say) and what is more, He has no standard by which He judges, nor will He ever be judgmental or unaccepting of anyone or anything. This is the Jesus in whom they place their trust—a false Jesus—but a “Jesus”, nonetheless.

In short, the “Christ alone” in whom they trust is a self-imaged idol, formulated based on a desired truth. If the Jesus of the Bible does not line up with the “spirit of Jesus” they desire to be the case, they will simply create a new Jesus in whom to place their faith. In this way, they can use religious-sounding language



and even some Scriptural references to defend their beliefs, and their savior even bears the same name as the Christian savior, but all the while they have created a new religion. A fallacious *Solus Christus*.

### **Right-Wing Dangers of Misunderstanding *Solus Christus***

It may come as a surprise to many to find that the right-wing, that is the broadly conservative wing, of Christianity has also fallen into a dangerous misunderstanding of *Solus Christus* in the mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The error proceeding out of this misunderstanding is sometimes referred to informally as “Jesus-olatry” combining “Jesus” and “idolatry.” In fact, the technical term for the error is *Christomonism* (*christ-o-mon-ism*). This is not to be confused with “Christocentrism” (*christ-o-sin-trism*), which seeks to find Christ throughout the Bible as the central figure of the Scriptures.

Christomonism directly refers to individuals who only accept Jesus as divine, rather than the Trinity, but the term has come to be associated with a method of preaching, singing, and believing that only recognizes the importance and value of Jesus Christ at the expense of the other members of the Trinity. To give an example, when sitting down to hear a sermon on John 3:16, most individuals would be entirely unsurprised to hear a sermon altogether centered around the person and work of Jesus Christ. Many would be disappointed or horrified if the sermon was not about Jesus.

In reality, however, John 3:16 does not itself focus on Jesus Christ. The verse is mainly about God the Father, not God the Son. It is a verse about how much God the Father loved the world. In showing His great love, it emphasizes how much God the Father gave so that believers will have eternal life. John 3:16, while mentioning Jesus, who is the “only Son” referenced mid-verse, does not center around Jesus—but the Father. And yet, how surprising would it be to hear a sermon on John 3:16 that focused not on Jesus, but on God the Father.

Similarly, it has been pointed out by such scholars as Sidney Greidanus

that the music played and sung in conservative Christian churches reflects this trend. He wrote in 1999, “The tendency toward Christomonism is also noticeable in Christian communities where the Psalms are no longer sung and ‘gospel songs’ as well as sermons focus primarily on Jesus in isolation from God the Father.” We might think nothing of it, but it is time for the American Christian community to recognize that we have talked about Jesus so much that many are entirely unaware of the personhood of the Holy Spirit and the activity of God the Father. That is not to say that Jesus is less important than we have recognized Him to be—but it is to say that the Father and Spirit are equally important.

**“What he was arguing for was the idea that so long as an individual believed in Jesus Christ— the Jesus Christ of the Bible— their beliefs about the rest of the Bible were negotiable.”**

In a shocking form of similarity to what occurred on the left-wing through the last century, one of America’s most prominent conservative denominations had an open example of Christomonism come to the forefront in the year 2000. That year, the Southern Baptist Convention met to affirm a new edition of its statement of faith. Wayne Ward, a professor of theology who had worked for decades at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, came to the floor and said, “The Bible is Scripture, God’s written Word. But it does not say anywhere ‘believe on the Bible and thou shalt be saved.’ No, ‘believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.’” He would go on to say, “The Bible is not equal to Jesus. The supreme revelation of God is Jesus Christ.” What he was arguing for was the idea that so long as an individual believed in Jesus Christ—the Jesus Christ of the Bible—their beliefs about the rest of the Bible were negotiable.

Al Mohler replied to Dr. Ward on the floor of that debate, “Jesus Christ said

himself, of the Scriptures, ‘These are they that testify of me.’ Pray tell, what do we know of Jesus apart from the Scriptures?” Dr. Mohler pointed out the danger of Dr. Ward’s erroneous concept of *Solus Christus*—he had disconnected it from *Sola Scriptura*. Much like many fundamentalist Christians who take great pride in announcing that they do not need theology or hermeneutics because they have “determined to know nothing apart from Jesus Christ and Him crucified”, Dr. Ward made the error of thinking that even the Jesus of the Bible can be understood in a vacuum apart from the rest of the Bible.

This *Solus Christus*, only slightly different from that of the liberals, does recognize the Jesus of the Bible as the true Jesus, but in applying what is known about Him, it lacks any ability to get up and cross the street because it has denied the foundational truths that Jesus Himself claimed were to be known about Himself. When Jesus walked with the two men on the road to Emmaus, He explained who He was to the men by “beginning with Moses and all the prophets” (Luke 24:27).

### **The Only Appropriate Application of *Solus Christus***

It has unfortunately gone rather unnoticed to this point that there is a problem in the modern American application of *Solus Christus*. As has been shown, there seems to be a proclivity amongst left-leaning individuals to create a “Jesus Christ” who fits the desires of those seeking to use him (their false Jesus) for the accomplishment of their own causes. This person will then be worshipped and proclaimed as if he is the same Jesus as the one in the Bible, though notably without all of His “less-desirable qualities”.

Across the aisle, however, the conservatives have shown an equal and similarly dangerous proclivity towards extracting the Jesus of the Bible from His Scriptural context and applying Him for their own purposes. This can come from the desire to formulate a certain hermeneutic, or a certain ethic, or even a certain governing system. Bereft of the remainder of Scripture, even the Jesus of

the Bible can be misrepresented and used to justify one's own purposes. Of equal concern is the fact that even a faithful church which teaches a faithful doctrine of Christ may fall out of *Christocentric* preaching, singing, and teaching, into *Christomonic* preaching, singing, and teaching. In their devotion to Christ, they sometimes abandon their devotion to God the Father and God the Spirit.

**The *only* appropriate way to apply the doctrine of *Solus Christus* is in union with the other *Solas* of the Reformation.**

A "Jesus Christ" formulated apart from the Scriptures is imaginary. A "Jesus" who does not deliver salvation on the basis of the grace of God, through faith alone, is imaginary. A "Jesus" who acts for social causes and not the Glory of God is imaginary. And an imaginary Christ will serve no one any more use than an idol of wood. Carefully, it could be said today that many people claiming to worship "Jesus Christ" are indeed worshipping a false god—because the Jesus Christ they worship is not the Jesus Christ of Christianity.

**References:**

- i. Fred Craddock, "The Gospel of God" in *Preaching as Theological Task*, Thomas Long and Edward Farley, eds., (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 74.
- ii. This phrase originated in Charles Sheldon, *In His Steps* (Chicago: Chicago Advance, 1897).
- iii. Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 178.
- iv. Videos of this exchange and the rest of the discussion can be found on YouTube.

## Recommended Reading on *Solus Christus*

In this issue of *Theology for Life Magazine*, we've been talking about *Solus Christus* (Christ alone). We understand that we haven't covered everything on this topic, but it is our prayer that readers of this issue will grow in their understanding of it so they can stand fast on the Word of God.

If you've found this issue helpful and would like to study this subject further, please check out the following reading list. These books are at the top of their genre in both excellence and readability.

- *In Christ Alone: Living the Gospel Centered Life* by Sinclair Ferguson
- *The Glory of Christ: His Office and Grace* by John Owen
- *Christ, the Believer's Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption* (eBook) (Various Authors) (i)
- *Salvation Accomplished by the Son* by Robert Peterson
- *Our Sufficiency in Christ* by John MacArthur
- *Christ Alone: The Uniqueness of Jesus as Savior* by Stephen Wellum
- *The Canons of Dort*
- *Institutes of the Christian Religion* by John Calvin

I hope you'll find these resources helpful as I have.

In Christ Alone,  
Dave Jenkins  
Executive Editor, *Theology for Life Magazine*

**Source:**

- i. <https://www.monergism.com/christ-believers-wisdom-righteousness-sanctification-and-redemption-ebook>



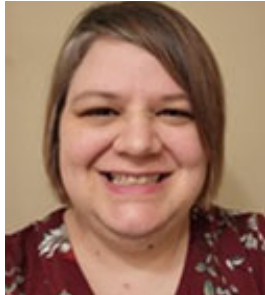


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Dave Jenkins is happily married to his wife, Sarah. He serves as the Executive Director of Servants of Grace Ministries, the Executive Editor of *Theology for Life Magazine*, the host of several podcasts. He is the author of *The Word Explored: The Problem of Biblical Illiteracy and What to Do About It* (House to House, 2021), *The Word Matters: Defending Biblical Authority Against the Spirit of the Age* (G3 Press, 2022), and *Contentment: The Journey of a Lifetime* (Theology for Life, 2024).



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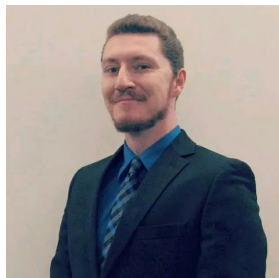
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