

What Catholics will find when they read their Bibles (part one)

By Jay Wegter

The opening question when studying our Bibles is this: *how much more authoritative is the Word of God than the word of man?* The Word of God is inerrant, infallible, and authoritative. But, historically, the corruption and decay of true religion advances as the traditions of men replace the clear commands of God found in Scripture. Jesus confronted the Pharisees on this very matter—He condemned these religious leaders for **transgressing God’s commandments in order to adhere to their traditions** (Mt 15:3-9).

3 And He answered and said to them, “Why do you yourselves **transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?**

7 “You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you:

8 ‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS,
BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.

9 ‘BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME,
TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.’ ”

This is a stern warning to us all. For God exalts His Word as the only infallible final authority for all faith and practice. He commands that we *have no other gods before Him* (Ex 20:3). And He commands us not to *take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain* (Ex 20:7). Christ is Lord of all; His Name is above every name (Phil 2:9). Yet, God Himself has put something above His own Name: “*For Thou hast magnified Thy Word above all Thy Name*” (Ps 138:2). This is what God says about the Holy Scriptures.

The Bible is the very Word of God, “*God is not a man that He should lie*” (Num 23:19). “*Thy Word is truth*” (Jn 17:17). Men are sinners; therefore they are prone to distort and oppose God’s truth: “*Let God be true and every man a liar*” (Rom 3:4).

So crucial does our soul’s safety depend upon loyalty to God’s truth, that the Apostle Paul proclaims in a warning that we must be extremely watchful; for falsehood can come from those who appear religious and sincere (Gal 1:6-9): **6** “I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; **7** which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to **distort the gospel of Christ**. **8** But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! **9** As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

God’s Word is unbreakable; it is eternal: “*Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away*” (Mt 24:35). As Christ has said, His Word is more permanent than the present creation itself. Christ’s words (the Holy Scriptures) are the basis for our judgment on the last day (Jn 12:48): “*He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.*”

We cannot separate Christ Jesus from the written Word; He is the eternal utterance of God. He is the living Word; He is the Word of God become man (flesh) (Jn 1:1-5, 14). **1** “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was in the beginning with God. **3** All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. **4** In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. **5** The Light shines in the darkness, and the

darkness did not comprehend it. **14** And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

The whole of the Scriptures are the Word of Christ (Lu 24:25-27). **25** And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! **26** “Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” **27** Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

The ‘different Jesus’ of false religion separates Christ from His Word. Jesus Himself warns of ‘another Jesus’—a false Christ—a dangerous ‘Jesus’ who cannot save. Christ cautioned that at the end of the age ‘false Christs’ would abound (Mt 24:4): **4** And Jesus answered and said to them, “See to it that no one misleads you.” **5** “For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many.”

Satan was a liar and deceiver from the beginning; he can use even seemingly religious people to twist the Word of God into soul-destroying lies. This has been part of his destructive mission from the beginning: see Genesis 3:1-5; John 8:44). In this sense the Bible is a dangerous book, for those who mishandle it by means of false teaching do so to their own destruction (2 Pet 3:16): **16** “. . . As also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, **to their own destruction.**”

The Apostle Paul also warns of this ‘different Jesus’ who is not the true Jesus of the Holy Scriptures: (2 Cor 11:3-4). **3** “But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of *devotion* to Christ. **4** For if one comes and **preaches another Jesus** whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear *this* beautifully.”

In his final address to the Ephesian elders the Apostle Paul warns that false teaching will come from ‘religious’ places and ‘religious’ people—therefore we must examine all things by the Word of God (Acts 20:28-30): **28** “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. **29** “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; **30** and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. **31** “Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.”

We must not imagine that our own discernment is sufficient to counter error. It is the Word of God that identifies what is false. For Christ warns that religious deception is so convincing that if it were possible even the elect (those chosen of God) would be deceived (Mt 24:23-24). We must know the Scriptures and love others enough to warn them (James 5:19-20): **19** “My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, **20** let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”

Everything is to be tested by Scripture—this is God’s command for true believers (2 Tim 2:15):**15** “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, **accurately handling the word of truth.**” The Bible commends those who examine the Scriptures to test every truth claim (Acts 17:11-12): **11** “Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, **examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.** **12** Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men.”

God's 'testimony' of the human condition is that ALL men come into this world loving darkness instead of the light (God's truth) (Jn 3:19-20): 19 "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and **men loved the darkness rather than the Light**, for their deeds were evil. 20 "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. 21 "But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God." Do you see this? Those who practice the truth come to the light; they love the light (truth) of God's Word and devoted to studying the Scriptures.

Our sinfulness is not merely our deeds which transgress God's law; our sin is what we are by nature in our thoughts and affections. For this reason, salvation can only take place if we are first **convicted our sin by the power of the Holy Spirit** (Jn 16:8): 8 "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me."

The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to convict us—to gain the 'verdict' in our conscience that our sin deserves judgment by God and that our sin separates us from God and that we cannot be accepted by God by our religious works (Rom 3:10): 10 "as it is written, "THERE IS **NONE RIGHTEOUS**, NOT EVEN ONE; 11THERE IS **NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS**, THERE IS **NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD**; 12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS **NONE WHO DOES GOOD**, THERE IS **NOT EVEN ONE**." There is no exception, all have sinned and are need of salvation (Rom 3:23; 6:23): 23 "for **all have sinned** and fall short of the glory of God." 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Christ spoke of God the Father as "HOLY FATHER" (Jn 17:11). What a travesty it is therefore that a sinful mortal ('priest', cardinal, or pope) should take that title for himself. That title used by Christ belongs to God the Father alone.ⁱ When the Pope sits as 'Christ' speaking on matters of faith and morals, he supposedly speaks *ex cathedra*ⁱⁱ—and is to be regarded as infallible.ⁱⁱⁱ This is to impersonate the authority of the Holy Spirit. For the Spirit alone speaks infallibly (Jn 16:13): 13 "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come." (See also 1 Jn 4:1-8).

Scripture warns that the coming antichrist will claim to be a god and to speak infallibly while taking his seat in the temple (2 Thess 2:3-4): 3 "Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that **he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God**."

Jesus warned that many would come in His Name (Mt 24:5). The Apostle Paul also sternly cautioned that a significant part of their power to deceive would be in the signs they would perform (Mt 24:5): 8 "Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; 9 *that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and **signs and false wonders**, 10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. 11For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. 13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth."

What are these signs and curious wonders which deceive so many? Roman Catholic doctrine

teaches that a priest is given powers which enable him to call Christ out of heaven—to call the Creator of the universe from His throne to become a piece of bread. The absurdity is only overshadowed by the level of blasphemy in this claim. Christ the Lord must obey the wishes of a priest and become a piece of bread? This horrific doctrine is not found in Holy Scripture.

How profane and forgetful this is of who Christ is: Lord of all (Rom 10:2-9); seated at God's right hand and over all things (Eph 1:20-22); Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer (Heb 1:1-3). Christ is the Judge of every soul (Jn 5:22-23; Acts 17:30-31). In making Christ into bread, the priest becomes "the creator of his Creator."^{iv} At the priest's command, Christ, the King of kings must allow Himself to be eaten by anyone to whom He is given by the priest.^v Roman Catholic doctrine states that anyone who denies these priestly powers of transubstantiation *is to be accursed and damned as a heretic.*^{vi}

The Modern Catholic Dictionary states that "the Eucharist is the piece of bread that has been changed into Jesus Christ. That wafer is adored as God, and is placed onto the tabernacle sitting on the Roman Catholic altar."^{vii} The mass takes place over 50,000 times a day around the world. Jesus supposedly goes through the un-bloody 'sacrifice' of the mass. Roman Catholic doctrine thus states that Christ is physically present and is found in every Roman Catholic mass worldwide.

During the mass, the priest places the Eucharist ('Jesus Christ') in the Monstrance (the sunbeam shaped ornament he holds). Faithful Roman Catholics kneel before 'Jesus' as the Eucharist, to adore or kiss Him. Children are instructed, "Where is Jesus now?" They answer, "in the Eucharist—the bread." How can man-made tradition take people so far from what God commands? God will not honor man-made traditions which oppose the clear doctrines of Scripture. Jesus warns in Matthew 24:23-25—do not believe it if someone tells you Christ is here or there. For when Christ returns to the earth; it will like lightning stretching across the heavens in blinding glory and power. 23 "Then if anyone says to you, '**Behold, here is the Christ,**' or '**There He is,**' do not believe *him*. 24 "For **false Christs** and false prophets will arise and will show great **signs and wonders**, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. 25 "Behold, I have told you in advance."

Who should Catholics believe? Should they believe their priests or Christ?^{viii} The error becomes even more evident when the purpose for the mass is contrasted with what God says in His Word about Christ's death. For Jesus was not lying when He said, "It is finished" (Jn 19:30; Mt 27:51). His final words from the cross indicate that our Savior was stating that His atoning work fully satisfied the just demands of God on our behalf. A complete substitution for sinners took place in His bloody death (1 Pet 2:24; 3:18): 24 "and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." 18 "For **Christ also died for sins once for all**, the just for the unjust, **so that He might bring us to God**, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit."

This is why the 'sacrifice' of the mass is so grievous—for it denies what Christ has proclaimed—namely that His sacrifice is finished, complete, fully accepted by God the Father (Rom 4:25). The very foundational argument of the book of Hebrews in the N.T. is that Christ's sacrifice is finished, NEVER to be repeated (Heb 9:24-28)! 24 For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a *mere* copy of the true one, **but into heaven itself**, now to appear in the presence of God for us; 25 **nor was it that He would offer Himself often**, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. 26 Otherwise, He would have needed to **suffer often** since the foundation of the world; **but now once** at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. 27 And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment, 28 so Christ also,

having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.”

Christ’s once for all sacrifice stands in stark contrast the Roman Catholic mass in which the Son of God is ‘crucified afresh’ and put to open shame (Heb 6:4-6): 4 “For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and *then* have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, **since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.**”

Christ’s sacrifice 2000 years ago was perfect (Heb 10:10-12): 10 “By this will we have been sanctified **through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.** 11 Every [O.T.] priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; 12 but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, 13 waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET. 14 For **by one offering** He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. BUT, Christ’s **once for all sacrifice** is denied when Catholicism foists the deception that Jesus is a ‘continually dying Savior’—a ‘dead’ Christ.^{ix} God’s Word affirms in the strongest language that Christ’s death is never to be repeated.

Therefore, by participating in the mass, well-meaning Catholics are actually contradicting what God has said about Christ’s work on Calvary’s cross being finished. Jesus tells us that those who love Him *keep His Word* (Jn 14:15): 15 “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” What is not in agreement with the Word of God is rebellion (1 Sam 15:22-23): 22 “Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, **to obey is better than sacrifice,** And to heed than the fat of rams. 23 “For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry.”

The N.T. book of Hebrews was written to show us the completeness of Christ’s work. The great warning in this epistle is: Do not neglect the perfect remedy for sin that God has provided through Christ (Heb 2:1-3; 12:25): 1 “For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away *from it.* 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, 3 **how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?** After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard.” 25 “See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned *them* on earth, much less *will* we *escape* who turn away from Him who *warns* from heaven.”

The book of Hebrews magnifies Christ as the ONLY Priest recognized by God (Heb 7:24-25): 24 “But Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, **holds His priesthood permanently.** 25 Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. 26 For it was fitting for us to have **such a high priest,** holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; 27 who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the *sins* of the people, because this He did **once for all** when He offered up Himself. 28 For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, *appoints* a Son, made perfect forever.”

Please let this sink in: *because Christ’s work on Calvary’s cross is finished once for all—at the moment Christ died, God tore the veil in two in the Jewish temple indicating the end of all sacrificing priesthoods* (Mt 27:51). The way to the holy place—the way into the presence of God was now

established through Christ (“a new and living way”—Hebrews 10:20). God is done with a sacrificing priesthood! Christ is our High Priest who fully represents believing sinners before the throne of God (Rom 8:32-34): 32 “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? **Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.**” Christ is our High Priest, He continually represents every true believer before the throne of God.

Now here is the wonderful news: because Christ’s once for all sacrifice is complete, the ONLY priesthood recognized by God now is made up of all believers. And what do they offer up to God? Praise and thanksgiving for Christ’s all-sufficient finished work on the cross (Heb 13: 15 “Through Him then, let us continually offer up **a sacrifice of praise to God**, that is, **the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.** 16 And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” Christ’s work is complete, it is a sin to attempt to add to it, or repeat it—the only priestly activity now which God recognizes on earth is the thanksgiving offered by every true believer for Christ’s finished work.

Scripture is crystal clear: every true Christian is a priest to God offering praise and thanksgiving (1 Pet 2:5-9): 5 “You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house **for a holy priesthood**, to **offer up spiritual sacrifices** acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. **9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION**, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.”

God is telling us that all forgiven sinners make up a royal priesthood—worshipping members of the family of God (Rev 1:6): 6 “and **He has made us to be a kingdom, priests** to His God and Father—to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” God is describing Christians when He says we are ‘priests’ (Rev 5:10): 10 “You have made them *to be* **a kingdom and priests** to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.” Born again Christians comprise a ‘holy temple of living stones’ who forever will offer up thanksgiving to Christ (Eph 2:19-22): 19 “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”

Jesus hates false religious systems. He refers to them as ‘the mother of harlots’. The mother of abominations (Rev 17:5): 4 “The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality, 5 and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, “BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” 6 And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus.”

Christ Jesus urges His people to ‘come out from among her’—to come out of false religious systems (Rev 18:4): 4 “I heard another voice from heaven, saying, “**Come out of her, my people**, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues; 5 for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.”

No mortal human priest can ever represent us before God, remove our sins, or add to the work of Christ. Scripture tells us that there is but **one Mediator between God and man** (1 Tim 2:5): 5 “For there

is one God, *and one mediator* also between God and men, *the man* Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony *given* at the proper time.”

Countless Roman Catholics imagine that their souls are relatively ‘safe’ because they are on some kind of ‘middle road’—this deception cannot save them in the end. To imagine that purgatory will ‘clean up’ any unfinished business with God is a cruel trick of Satan. For purgatory is not found in Holy Scripture, the Word of God tells us that **immediately, upon death, comes judgment** (Heb 9:27): 27 “And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment.” This could not be more plainly stated than it is here stated.

The forgiven sinner’s hope comes solely through the promise of the gospel of Jesus Christ—He alone saves from the wrath to come (Rom 5:8-11): But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath *of God* through Him. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”

God’s grace comes through faith in the gospel testimony of God concerning His Son (Jn 3:36): 36 “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” God has told us the good news concerning what Christ has accomplished—it is our responsibility to believe and not to add to it the corrupting traditions of sinful man (1 Jn 5:9-11) 9 “If we receive the testimony of men, **the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son.** 10 The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; **the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar**, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. 11 And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”

God had never desisted from His original purpose of making men and women in His image. But when Adam sinned, his rebellious act brought in death, decay, war, suffering, justice, and disease. Man in his pride has sought humanly devised remedies. But Christ alone, the perfect image of God (Col 1:15) is the only way the human race can be restored from the ruin of sin.

All men and women are born with ‘**natural**’ **ideas** about God and religion. Scripture refers to this mindset as ‘the natural man’ (1 Cor 2:14): 14 “But a **natural man** does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. 15 But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. 16 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.”

Only the **new birth** (regeneration) can change us from natural men to spiritually thinking men and women (Titus 3:5-6): 5 “He saved us, **not on the basis of deeds which we have done** in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life.”

Those who are **born again** (regenerated) love God’s Word and are given the ability to understand it by means of God’s Holy Spirit living in them (1 Pet 1:22-23; 2:1-3): 22 “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, 23 for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through

the living and enduring word of God.” 1 “Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, 2 **like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word**, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, 3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.”

All natural/false religion begins with self and what self ‘can do’. This form of thinking reasons up from self to God in order to gain acceptance (picture an upward arrow). The gospel of Jesus Christ is the exact opposite. By the Spirit’s enabling gift of faith, the sinner reasons down from who Christ is and what He has done (picture a downward arrow). This kind of thinking requires the almighty grace of God. For all of us naturally start with self in our religious reasoning. Here is the order in fleshly, natural thinking: *try to be sanctified in order to be justified*. But the gospel order is: *by faith in Christ the believing sinner is justified and forgiven that he might live a sanctified life*.

This is the gospel order—perfectly spelled out in the book of Romans (Rom 4:5-8) 5 “But to the **one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly**, his faith is credited as righteousness, 6 just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: 7 “BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED. 8 “BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT.”

All **false religious hope** places its trust in what moral and religious things a man can do. But the gospel is the power of God—those who believe place their full hope in Christ and what He has done for guilty sinners (Rom 1:16-17): 16 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 “For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS *man* SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”

The promise to the believing sinner is that if he repents and believes the gospel, he shall immediately be forgiven and saved from his sin. But the book of Romans tells us that to *believe upon Christ*, is to believe upon Him as **Lord of all**. This means that you bow before Him as your rightful King and Lord (Rom 10:9-10): 9 “that if you **confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord**, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”

Many today acknowledge the historical facts of Jesus’ life (His virgin birth, death and resurrection)—the very things we celebrate at Christmas and Easter. But, no one is a saved person UNLESS he has **bowed before Christ as Lord of his life**. Jesus describes His true followers in this manner; they do not love their lives in this world (Jn 12:25-26): 25 “He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. 26 “If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.”

Have you ‘seen’ the beauty of Christ—how perfectly suited He is to save sinners? If you have then you will have a kind of *desperation*—you will be done with walking the fence. You will have seriously considered the deplorable state of your soul in light of the searching character of a Holy God. The subject of eternity now rests heavily on you. You are done with excuses; done with bribing your conscience. You are now looking in the mirror of Scripture and facing the sins you once excused: your covetousness, resentment, lust, anxiety, selfishness, and anger. There is only one thing that ‘qualifies’ a person for Christ—it is to know that your sin is ruinous.

Christ died and rose to deliver sinners from their sin and guilt and to give them eternal life. He made the purchase—it is a gift of grace—that grace cannot be purchased by us, or earned, or gained through religious ceremonies—we cannot make ourselves eligible for this grace (Rom 6:23): 23 “For the wages of sin is death, but the **free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord**.” If you know

yourself to be a sinner; come to Christ now, He has promised to receive those who come carrying nothing in their hands but their guilt (Jn 6: 35 “Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. 36 “But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. 37 “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. 44 “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. 45 “It is written in the prophets, ‘AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. 46 “Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father. 47 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.”

Endnotes:

ⁱ “Is There another Christ?” Chick Publications, Chino, CA.

ⁱⁱ Cited in: “Is there another Christ?” *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, John A. Harden, 1980, pp. 253, 561.

ⁱⁱⁱ Cited in: “Is There another Christ?” *Dogmatic Canons and Decrees*, Tan Books, Rockford, IL, p. 256.

^{iv} Cited in: “Is There another Christ?” *Dignity and Duties of the Priest or Selva*, by St. Alphonsus de Liguori.

^v “Is There another Christ?”

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} Cited in: “Is There another Christ?” *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, p. 530.

^{viii} Ibid.

^{ix} Ibid.