



Critical Issues Commentary

A BIBLICALLY BASED COMMENTARY ON ISSUES THAT IMPACT YOU

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2003

ISSUE NUMBER 74

THE GOSPEL AND ROMAN CATHOLICISM

BY BOB DEWAAY

"It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all."

(1Timothy 1:15)

"He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life."

(1John 5:12,13)

There are many hurting and disillusioned people who grew up under the teachings of the Roman Catholic church. They are disillusioned because the church that they were told is their only hope of getting to God has been found to be scandalous. Knowing nothing but the Catholic Church, feeling let down by the Catholic Church, and knowing of no other way to find God, they feel hopeless. This article is addressed to such individuals. I want to share with you some things that Jesus and His Apostles taught that you probably never heard from your Church. What you know so far seems like "bad" news: only the Roman Catholic Church holds the key to finding God's forgiveness and this church has lost credibility. So you either support the church in spite of evidence that there are many serious problems, or you give up on finding God. What the church has not told you, but is contained in the Bible she claims to believe, is the truth that will set you free.

JESUS DID IT ALL FOR YOU

The most common problem in the minds of many who have grown up under the guidance of the Roman Catholic church, is the idea that Jesus did not do enough to assure anyone of

heaven. It is understood that the works prescribed by the church are necessary if one is to ever hope to please God and find forgiveness. Another problem is the popular perception that all good people go to heaven, especially if they are Catholic. So there are the confusing, conflicting notions that only by obeying Rome can one hope to find heaven and that everyone will probably go there anyway unless they are horrible criminals. I will show you from the Bible that both of these ideas are not true.

Let us start with the idea that all "good" people go to heaven, especially if they are Catholic. One Bible verse quoted at the beginning of this article says that only the one who "has the Son" has life. Those who do not are excluded. The next verse makes it clear that it is eternal life that Saint John was writing about. The Roman Catholic church believes that there is a literal heaven and hell, and they are right about that matter. But what you have not been told is what the Bible says is the basis of God's final judgment that determines your eternal destiny. Saint John says it is your relationship to Jesus Christ that determines this. Listen to what Jesus said as quoted by His beloved Apostle John: "*Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and*

believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life" (John 5:24). Jesus says that eternal life is something that one can have based on believing His Words and trusting God. When He says, "passed out of death," He is speaking of the matter of our sinful condition. The penalty for sin is death. Here is how Saint Paul explained it: "*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" (Romans 6:23).

God allowed Saint John, at the end of his life, to see and write about what will happen at the end of this age. He wrote about the final judgment: "*And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds" (Revelation 20:12).* He then wrote about the final destiny of those whose names were not found in the book of life: "*And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15).* What we need to know is how our name can be found in that book. What work can we do that will assure that our name will be found in the roll book of heaven? The Roman Catholic church has a long list of works you have been told to do, works that will keep you busy the rest of your life. But what did Jesus say we must do?

Jesus was asked directly what work was necessary to please God: "*They said therefore to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" (John 6:28).* What do you think Jesus' answer was? Did He tell them to make sure to be very religious for the rest of their lives and make sure they give to the church? No. Saint John wrote down the

very words of Jesus on this matter: “Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent’” (John 6:29). Jesus was the one God sent, who existed with God from all eternity, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus walked the face of the earth as the only sinless One, fully human and fully God. The Roman Catholic church believes these facts. What Jesus said was that the work of God is to put your faith in Christ. This is not a meritorious work you do, but it is the work of God in you that transforms you.

This belief that is necessary to please God and to have your name found in the Book of Life so that you escape the final judgment, includes trusting in Christ for what He has done for you. Just after Jesus told those inquirers about the work of God, which is faith in Christ, Jesus also said this:

Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you, that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.” (John 6:35-37)

You must come to Christ and trust Him as the One who has everything you need. Many who personally saw Jesus do many miracles did not believe on Him. Those whom he was talking to in John 6 had seen Him multiply bread miraculously and walk on water. Yet they refused to believe Him when He taught them that He was the only way to God. Consider what He said to these same people: “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:40).

PAYING THE PENALTY

So Jesus taught that you can have eternal life and have assurance that you will participate in the final resurrection to

spend eternity in heaven with Jesus and all the saints. There is important content about this faith you must have that the Roman Catholic church likely has never told you. Their own Scriptures teach that Jesus Christ paid the penalty for all sins for sinners who trust Him, once for all. It is the **once for all** that your church has failed to inform you about. You likely feel like Jesus has to be sacrificed over and over again in the Mass, and that you must participate or your sins can never be forgiven. Please let me share some Bible verses with you about this matter so you can judge for yourself what Jesus and His personal disciples taught.

Saint Peter explained the purpose of Jesus’ death, “For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God” (1Peter 3:18a). Since Jesus was sinless, He died for **our** sins, not His. That He died “once for all,” means that the payment He made to God for sins was sufficient payment for any and all sins. No further sacrifice would ever be necessary. When we speak of the blood of Jesus, we are speaking of his laid down life, and the literal blood shed when He was crucified. That one act satisfied God’s holy and just requirements for payment for sins. “Once for all” means that it never needs to be or will be repeated. We need to trust His once for all payment for our sins rather than trust human works. All religious works are worthless if they are not done out of faith in Christ’s finished work. Saint Paul wrote, “whatever is not from faith is sin” (Romans 14:23b).

Peter also told that Jesus’ “once for all” death for sins is for the purpose of “bringing us to God.” It is Jesus who brings us to God. Those who put their faith in Jesus and Him alone, He will bring to heaven so that we might be in the presence of God. Jesus Himself said, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:3). After Jesus died for sins, He was raised from the dead on the third day. After appearing to His disciples He bodily ascended into heaven. The apostles of Christ had been told to

be comforted, because He was making a place for them there. Jesus then made a very strong statement, “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me’” (John 14:6). Jesus and Jesus alone can bring us to the Father, and give us a place in Heaven.

THE MEDIATOR

God brings us into a relationship with Himself when we come to Jesus Christ by faith and believe that He paid the penalty, once for all. This means that we repent (turn away from trusting our selves or anything other than God) and believe (trust fully in the resurrected Christ). Those who repent and believe are saved from the wrath of God. Saint John wrote about this, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36). God’s wrath against sin was averted by the blood of Jesus. The Bible tells us about how Jesus made a better sacrifice than the Old Testament animal sacrifices:

And not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Hebrews 9:12-14)

Jesus cleanses us not just by an external covering of sin, but He cleanses us from the inside out. He does a work of grace in our hearts and minds. When our conscience is defiled because we know we have sinned, doing a few good deeds will not cleanse it. If we trust Jesus’ finished work, He will fully cleanse our conscience, making us forgiven and clean.

The next verse in the book of Hebrews after the one just quoted calls

Jesus our “mediator.” This is very important for you to understand. It on this point where the Roman Catholic Church has misled you and millions of others. You likely have been told that there a numerous mediators between you and God, from the local priest, to the bishops, other prelates, the pope, glorified saints, and Mary. However, please think about what Saint Paul wrote in the Bible: “For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1Timothy 2:5). There is only **one** mediator, Jesus Christ. You may have been told that you cannot go directly to Jesus. If so, nothing could be further from the truth. The Bible says that you **must** go to Jesus to be saved: “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Jesus is man and God, the only perfect, sinless savior. As God He is able to hear your prayers as well as everyone else’s. Any person lacking the qualities of deity cannot do so. We are finite and shall always be finite for all eternity. If you are in a room with ten or 15 people speaking at once, you are soon unable to understand any of them. Imagine having a million people speaking to you at once! To be able to hear them all simultaneously and respond to them would require infinite intelligence and power. Jesus has that, since He is God. Mary is a glorified saint¹, but still finite as are the rest of the saints and all created beings. Jesus was never created, but

existed with God and as God from all eternity. Therefore, Jesus can hear you and go to the Father on your behalf, if you trust him.² Mary cannot possibly hear and answer all the prayers being directed her way every day, she is a **finite human being**. Only Jesus can help you, and He wants you to ask Him to. Jesus makes this invitation to you: “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28,29).

TRUSTING JESUS FOR SALVATION

The Gospel is the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. The gospel is free. None of us will ever merit salvation, it is given to sinners as a free gift. The Bible ends with and invitation to receive this free gift: “And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost” (Revelation 22:17). Coming to Christ means giving up trusting self, man, or any religious system. It means trusting the finished work of Christ on your behalf.

The message of the Bible is very simple. It is summarized in **Jeremiah**: “Thus says the Lord, “Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind And makes flesh his strength, And whose heart turns away from the Lord . . . Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord And whose trust is the Lord” (Jeremiah 17:5,7). To trust any system

of religious works is to trust man. We must repent of this and believe upon Jesus Christ whom God raised from the dead. Saint Paul wrote: “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved” (Romans 10:9). To be saved means to be rescued from the penalty of sin and the wrath of God. To be saved means to be assured of spending eternity in heaven with God and all the glorified saints.

You have probably been told that no one can know for sure if they are completely right with God and assured of heaven. The Bible says differently. I will repeat this passage that was cited at the beginning of this article: “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.” (1John 5:13). You can know your eternal destiny now. Lay aside all the religious works and human intermediaries and turn in faith to Christ, believing that He paid the penalty for sins, once for all. God cannot lie, and He said that He gives eternal life to all who believe in Christ.

Critical Issues Commentary

copyright © 2003

Twin City Fellowship
P.O. Box 26127
St Louis Park, MN 55426
952-935-3100
www.twincityfellowship.com
pastorbob@twincityfellowship.com

1. According to the Bible all believers are saints. See Romans 1:7
2. You can ask the Father in Jesus’ name also, See John 16:23.