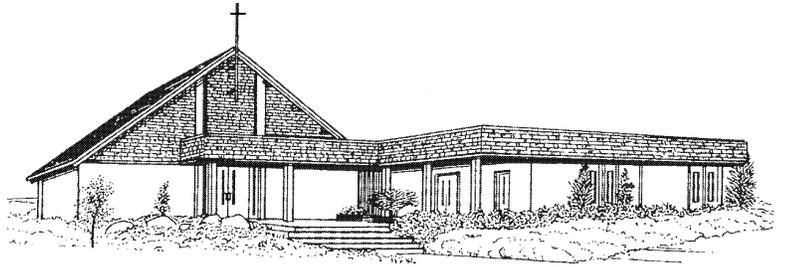




The Reporter



“Believing the Unbelievable”

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Through the course of our mid-week Advent worship we have been considering the people of faith. These were people who were chosen by God for an important role in the coming of God’s promised Savior. Three key people were Zechariah, Mary and Joseph. While Zechariah and Mary will be discussed in our mid-week services, Joseph should not be overlooked.

In a way, it would be easy to overlook his part in the birth of Jesus. It would be just as easy to glance over the reason he is even included in the Gospel accounts. While he may not have a “lead role” in the birth of Jesus, he does play a part in God’s plan of salvation, and he is an example for believers of every generation.

Joseph was, first and foremost, a child of God. He was a believer who held on to the promises contained in the writings of Moses and the Prophets. Joseph was also a member of the tribe of Judah, a descendant of David, and a resident of the town of Bethlehem. Although he lived in Nazareth in Galilee, his place of birth was Bethlehem. Joseph was a child of Adam and Eve. Namely, he was a sinner and prone to doubt and temptation, just as we are today.

From Matthew’s account we learn Joseph was faced with a dilemma. The young woman to which he was betrothed was pregnant. As one who followed the Law and the regulations of the Old Testament, he was deeply troubled because his wife-to-be was not carrying his child. Consequently, he had every right to break off the wedding plans and declare Mary to be unfaithful. He also had the right to free himself from the shame she had brought on their relationship. Joseph was also a sincere and caring man. He did not want to expose Mary to public ridicule and disgrace, so his plan was to put her away quietly.

It is easy to see how Joseph wrestled with a proper and God-pleasing course of action. It wasn’t until the Lord intervened through an angel that Joseph came to understand what the right decision was. Still, what the angel told Joseph to do required a great deal of faith. It also required him to believe the unbelievable. Matthew writes:

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name, Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

Continued on page 2

Unbelievable, from page 1

What the angel said made Joseph pause. Did I just hear what I thought I heard? How does this really resolve my predicament? Can I really go through with this? The Lord placed the unbelievable before Joseph. Yes, the child Mary was carrying was not his. Yes, there would be many questions, rumors, and innuendo. Yes, it would be difficult for Joseph give his family name to a child that was not part of his family. Joseph had to confront what appeared unbelievable head on. Still, Joseph did what the Lord told him to do. Joseph believed even when everything was unbelievable. Herein we see a valuable lesson.

Every day you and I struggle with what we believe is right and God-pleasing, and what we know is expedient and safe. It causes a dilemma. There isn't a day that goes by where our faith, namely, our trust in the Lord is tested. The test becomes particularly difficult when we have to make a decision regarding the practice of our faith and the demands of our life. These become especially apparent, and difficult, when the worship of our God and the study of his Word become involved.

There is a temptation to live for the weekends. Monday through Friday our schedules are controlled by school, work and other obligations. Saturday and Sunday there are fewer demands and obligations. Consequently, we are freer to make personal decisions and plans. Here we face the same daunting task Joseph had to face. Do I do what is right for me, or do I trust the Lord and follow his direction?

The world has encroached into the day about which the Lord says, "keep it set apart for me." The world has influenced our choices, our actions, our thinking, and even the practice of our faith. Look at how easy it is for us to make time for everything else on Sunday except for time with the Lord and time with his people. We can use all kinds of justifications, but in reality, we are confronted by the same plight Joseph faced. All the worldly justifications said, "put Mary away and get on with your life." In contrast the Lord said, "Take Mary as your wife and be my servant."

This choice required Joseph to trust the Lord, and as it were, to believe the unbelievable. So, it requires the same trust for each of us every day.

When I think about the choices we face, and where we finally put our trust, I am reminded of a gentleman I know. He had a very strong faith and he communicated that to his family. That family consisted of a wife and three very talented sons who were outstanding football and baseball players. One day the coaches informed the father, we will begin practicing and playing games on the weekends, and Sunday morning was not excluded. The gentleman said very politely, "If you choose to do this on Sunday mornings, it will be without my sons." The results were rather interesting. The Sunday practices never happened. There is another interesting outcome to this account. The world would have us think the sons failed to move any farther because they were not willing to sacrifice Sunday mornings for their sports. Each of them would have a different observation. Each son went on to play college sports, two with scholarships to local colleges, and one with a scholarship to the Air Force Academy. Each son would also be the first to say, the results came because they put the Lord first in their lives. They trusted the Lord for their futures.

This account could easily be dismissed as a different time and place that has no bearing today. Not really. God's people have always been challenged with difficult decisions, and the right answer always comes down to one thing. Am I willing to put my trust in the Lord? Am I ready to put him first? Am I ready to believe his promises when the world says they are unbelievable?

Joseph gives us a powerful example. When every reason the world offered made sense, he abandoned that line of reasoning. Some may have thought he was foolish and his life could have been better. But he went with what the Lord said. Unbelievable, you might think. Still, this is what life in Christ is all about.

God does ask us to believe what may seem unbelievable, but he also gives every reason to trust him. He gives us his Word. He gives us his Son. He gives us his faithful testimony throughout every generation. This is why we can believe the unbelievable, especially when it is the Lord who says, believe.

Thanksgiving Dinner—The Best Yet!

By Carl Schueler

Thanksgiving 2010. Once again we had another opportunity to praise the Lord for all the blessings we enjoy, and especially his salvation by grace!

The members of Our Redeemer have held a pre-Thanksgiving celebration just ahead of the official holiday for many years. This year was no exception, and we thank everyone who helped, particularly Karolyn Hanna and Linda Williams who decorated the fellowship hall. It is through the service of so many people that this evening becomes such a enjoyable event.

On Sunday, November 21st at 5:30 pm, we joined together to pray for Christ's attendance and blessing at our 2010 Thanksgiving dinner in the Fellowship Hall. Some thirty-five members, including family members and friends, provided delicacies for what I believe was the best pot-luck spread we've enjoyed. And that is saying something for the decade-long history of this now-traditional annual ORLC celebration. The serving tables were three in number and six feet long each—a total of eighteen feet of 30-inch wide serving space crowded with platters, serving bowls, and baskets of really delicious culinary delights!

In addition to traditional dishes of white turkey and sweet ham, brown sugar syrup-soaked sweet potatoes, mashed potatoes, and various healthful vegetable bowls, we also enjoyed some half-dozen different refreshing salads, a couple of non-poultry and sweetly spiced meat dishes, rolls, cranberry sauce, gravy—Wow! The Best Yet!



Following a conversational dinner with those seated nearby at a dozen well-decorated tables, desserts beckoned. Again, perhaps a dozen different options were available—so some enjoyed a couple of servings, while others sampled a little of each! While enjoying dessert, Linda led a special “round the tables” discussion among the guests based on interviews she asked each participant to conduct even before the dinner started.

On arrival, each guest was given a sheet of paper listing three questions for another guest to be interviewed:

1. A little known fact about you.
2. Your most interesting Thanksgiving memory.
3. What you are most thankful for this year.

Each person was asked to provide an answer to two of those three questions. The interviewer then was asked to introduce the guest he or she interviewed after dinner, and to present the answers to the two questions selected by the guest introduced. This was a creative way to ensure that everyone was introduced—and there were several guests new to ORLC. In the end, we all had the opportunity to learn something about each guest, and maybe something new even about those we think we already know!

Thanks again to Linda and Karolyn, as well as to everyone who made this a fine evening of thanks and praise to the Lord! Be sure to join us next year!



Notes & News for December

“In View of the Lord’s Coming”

As we continue with our Advent worship, which focuses on the 5th chapter of James, we can rejoice because God provides us with the blessings we need to prepare ourselves.

These blessings are:

Prosperity, Patience, Perseverance, and Prayer.

Our desire is to be ready for our Savior’s birth, as well as his second coming in glory.

Sunday morning worship is at 9:30 am

Mid-week Advent Worship

On December 1st we began our mid-week worship.

It reminded us through a study of Zechariah that we could believe the unbelievable. On

December 15th we will have our final mid-week service, and consider the lessons we learn from

Mary, the mother of our Savior.

Mid-week worship starts at 7:00 pm.

Ladies Christmas Get-together and Cookie Exchange

On December 7th at 7:00 pm the ladies of Our Redeemer, and their friends, will meet at Sonja Todd’s home for an enjoyable evening of food and friendship. Please remember to bring along 4 dozen cookies and a gift to exchange.

There will also be a “free-will” offering for New Beginnings. It is a WELS organization which works with single mothers who decide to keep their babies.

Christmas Concert with Susan Ann

On Wednesday, December 8th we will have Susan Ann Lunenburg with us. She will present a concert in song at 7:00 pm. This is a special opportunity to hear the Christmas message sung with familiar and newer melodies.

Plan to be present, and bring along family and friends. Plan to bring along cookies or snacks for after the program.

Christmas Fellowship and Caroling

On December 19th we will gather at 2:30 pm to decorate the church, enjoy a chili supper, and go caroling at Wood Glen Hall and the homes of two members. It is an enjoyable evening of service, food, fellowship, and dessert at Karolyn Hanna’s home after the caroling.

Make plans now to enjoy the evening!

Christmas Eve Worship

On December 24th at 7:00 pm we will celebrate the Nativity of our Savior. The service will lead us to consider “The Two Sides of Christmas - What the World Offers and What God Offers.” Christmas is a time of “good news and great joy.” So, plan to invite your friends, neighbors, and any who may be visiting you to share in that precious message - Christ the Savior is born!

Time for fellowship and light snacks will follow the service in the fellowship hall. Plan to bring “finger foods,” cookies, appetizers, etc

Christmas Day Worship

On December 25th at 9:30 am we will turn our attention to the “Songs of Christmas.” Not only will we have the opportunity to sing these joyous songs of praise, we will also learn more about them, and what led their authors to write them.

Once again, plan to invite friends and neighbors to meet Christ their New Born King.

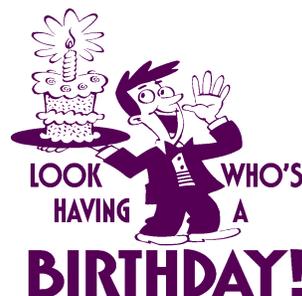
Meetings for December

Church Council	December 7th at 7:00 pm
Outreach	December 11th at 10:00 am
Board of Education	December 14th at 7:00 pm
Board of Elders	December 21st at 7:00 pm
Board of Trustees	December 29th at 7:00 pm

Congregational Annual & Budget Meeting

January 9th after the worship service

DECEMBER 2010



1st —Alan T.
11th —Isaac R.
12th —Bill W.
23rd —Barbara G.

And, of course:
25th—Jesus Christ
our new-born Savior!

Worldview Comparison Quiz—Part I

By Al Todd

Christian biblical, or confessional Lutherans have a worldview. Maybe you have not critically examined your worldview, but you do have one. In fact, everyone has a worldview. Some people who seem to consistently hold to a particular worldview often don't live their lives according to it. When questioned, they seem to hold to two or three worldviews at the same time.

I just finished reading a short book (91 pages) entitled *What in the World Is Going On* (by David Thompson, \$9.59 @ Bethany Lutheran College Bookstore).

The author, David Thompson, is an Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS; in fellowship with WELS) pastor and professor who recently organized the Confessional Christian Worldview Seminar (see review of *Here We Stand*, November 2010 *Reporter*).

Professor Thompson provides a broad overview of some of the most recognized worldviews to compare and contrast them with the Christian Confessional Lutheran Worldview.

As I received no negative comments on my quiz concerning the Lutheran Confessions in previous Reporters (on the other hand, I received no positive comments, either!), I assembled a series of quizzes regarding the leading Worldviews to help readers compare their personal worldviews and to see how the various worldviews compare.

I limited this quiz series to four basic worldviews: a) Theistic Existentialism, b) Modernism, c) Christian Confessional Lutheranism, and d) Post-modernism. Professor Thompson also examined "Spiritualism," which includes Pantheism and Paganism. This latter worldview is, however, so internally inconsistent and there are so many variations, depending on culture and geography, that I omitted it. Not only is it too confusing, but I also found even so-called "experts" in Spiritualism do not agree about what it comprises.

Note: Answers in next month's Reporter.

Next month:

Part II—a quiz on some additional Worldview Categories.

Worldview Quiz #1

The four Worldviews under consideration have the following designations:

A = Theistic Existentialism

B = Modernism (includes Naturalism, Darwinism, and Secular Humanism)

C = Christian Confessional Lutheranism

D = Post-modernism (includes Neo-Marxism, Constructivism, and Tolerance)

Match the above worldviews with each description in the five Worldview categories below. There can be more than one worldview for each description.

I. Worldview Category: **Prime Reality**

1. The Christian God _____
2. The Universe is a "closed box" which has always existed; there is nothing outside the box _____

II. Worldview Category: **Source of Knowledge and Truth**

1. Natural Knowledge and Special revelation _____
2. Natural Knowledge only _____

III. Worldview Category: **Understanding the Universe**

1. God created and preserves the Universe _____
2. Universe (matter) has always existed _____

IV. Worldview Category: **Understanding Man**

1. Man was made in the image of God _____
2. Evolved from lower forms of life according to natural processes to ensure that only the fittest survive _____
3. Evolved from lower forms of life according to God's design _____
4. Evolved from lower forms of life according to natural processes which the most powerful groups or cultures at any one time try to influence to make sure that they not only survive but remain in control _____

V. Worldview Category: **Explaining Evil**

1. The Fall into Sin _____
2. Man determines what is evil and what is not according to the extent of his scientific knowledge _____
3. There is no evil or sin per se; it all depends on what the most powerful groups or cultures say it is _____

Bible Basics—Book Review

Reviewed by Al Todd

By Donald Patterson

(Northwestern Publishing House, 96 pp., \$13.50)

- Can you give a good, short, easy to understand synopsis of the Bible to your friends, acquaintances, and relatives?
- Could you easily explain how the Bible differs from the key books and writings of all (false) religions other than Christianity?
- Would you be able to explain why you chose the Bible reading plan that you use to make sure you read the Bible (God's word after all!!) at least once per day for the rest of your life?
- How would you answer someone who asks how to get started in the Bible—the book that is far and away the all-time best seller?

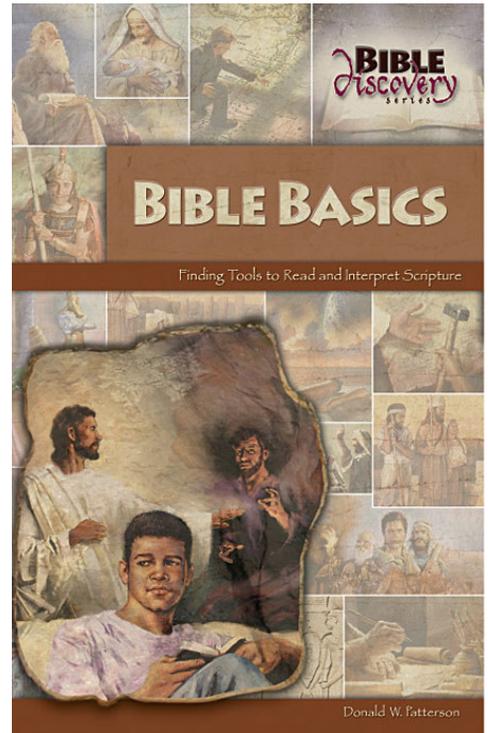
If you struggle to answer these questions, this book is for you!

This book can be read easily in one sitting or in one week—a chapter per day. Pastor Patterson (WELS Holy Word; Austin, Texas) writes in an easy, conversational style and never leaves the reader “in the dust” when discussing what can be difficult subjects.

This “bird’s eye view” or survey of the Bible will, as the editors of the *Bible Discovery Series* explain, “help readers fit people and events into the broader framework of Scripture.” I especially appreciated the chapter “Learning to Properly Interpret and Apply the Bible” as it is a helpful review and reminder that we should ask ourselves three basic questions every time we read a passage of the Bible:

- 1) What is the historical context of the passage?
- 2) What is the literary context of the passage?
- 3) What light do other sections of Scripture shed on this passage?

I think this little book (one volume of the Northwestern Publishing House *Bible Discovery Series*) would also make an excellent gift to someone you may know who would like to read and understand the Bible, but may find it a little daunting or confusing. Just another way to Go and Tell!



Reporters Wanted - A simple and rewarding way to serve!

Book review Personal Story of Faith
Event Reports Potluck, Gathering, Party, Field Trip

Half-page to three pages
Reviewed for scriptural consistency and readability
by 25th of month to appear in next issue

Hard-copy to Carl Schueler, or email to Carl Schueler (cfs_home@cox.net) or Pastor Proeber (pastor@orlcsb.net)

There is always a standing invitation to provide material for the *Reporter*. In the ten years, at least twelve members have authored over 50 articles which really makes every issue more interesting. These included articles on a wide variety of subjects: ORLC news, past and planned events, thought-provoking instructional articles on WELS history and other religions, book reviews, and articles relating to personal perspectives on faith in Jesus.

Catholic Canons on Justification & the Bible

By Carl Schueler

What a privilege it is to have God's Word recorded in the Bible. What a privilege it is to have a solid declaration of our faith and Scripture contained in the Confessions of the Lutheran Church. Many churches do not have this same heritage and sure foundation. Consider the thirty-three Roman Catholic *Canons Concerning Justification*, wherein "justified" means "saved." All thirty-three canons are to be accepted as the truth, namely canon law. What becomes disconcerting is the inclusion of the words, "let him be anathema," literally, let the person be eternally condemned who actually holds to the statement. Some of the statements do agree with Scripture, while some do not. We thank Carl for working through these 33 statements, and identifying which are Biblical (**YES**), and which are not (**NO**).

Carl also includes the following note: "Canons 5, 6, 22, 23, 28 and 29 are insufficiently clear to me to declare Biblically consistent or not. The rest I compared to cited Bible or confessional references to assess Biblical agreement." See if you agree . . .

Canon	Roman Catholic Canonical Statement	Biblical?
1	If anyone says that man can be justified before God by his own works, whether done by his own natural powers or through the teaching of the law, without divine grace through Jesus Christ, let him be anathema.	Yes
2	If anyone says that divine grace through Christ Jesus is given for this only, that man may be able more easily to live justly and to merit eternal life, as if by free will without grace he is able to do both, though with hardship and difficulty, let him be anathema.	Yes
3	If anyone says that without the predisposing inspiration of the Holy Ghost and without His help, man can believe, hope, love or be repentant as he ought, so that the grace of justification may be bestowed upon him, let him be anathema.	Yes
4	If anyone says that man's free will moved and aroused by God, by assenting to God's call and action, in no way cooperates toward disposing and preparing itself to obtain the grace of justification, that it cannot refuse its assent if it wishes, but that, as something inanimate, it does nothing whatever and is merely passive, let him be anathema.	No Col 2:13
5	If anyone says that after the sin of Adam man's free will was lost and destroyed, or that it is a thing only in name, indeed a name without a reality, a fiction introduced into the Church by Satan, let him be anathema.	?
6	If anyone says that it is not in man's power to make his ways evil, but that the works that are evil as well as those that are good God produces, not permissively only but also propria et per se, so that the treason of Judas is no less His own proper work than the vocation of St. Paul, let him be anathema.	?
7	If anyone says that all works done before justification, in whatever manner they may be done, are truly sins, or merit the hatred of God; that the more earnestly one strives to dispose himself for grace, the more grievously he sins, let him be anathema.	No Is 64:6
8	If anyone says that the fear of hell, whereby, by grieving for sins, we flee to the mercy of God or abstain from sinning, is a sin or makes sinners worse, let him be anathema.	Yes
9	If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification, and that it is not in any way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the action of his own will, let him be anathema.	No Phil 2:13
10	If anyone says that men are justified without the justice of Christ, whereby He merited for us, or by that justice are formally just, let him be anathema.	Yes
11	If anyone says that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and remains in them, or also that the grace by which we are justified is only the good will of God, let him be anathema.	Yes

Catholic Canons & The Bible, continued

Canon	Roman Catholic Canonical Statement	Biblical?
12	If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence alone that justifies us, let him be anathema.	No: Eph 2:8
13	If anyone says that in order to obtain the remission of sins it is necessary for every man to believe with certainty and without any hesitation arising from his own weakness and indisposition that his sins are forgiven him, let him be anathema.	No: Athanasian Creed
14	If anyone says that man is absolved from his sins and justified because he firmly believes that he is absolved and justified, or that no one is truly justified except him who believes himself justified, and that by this faith alone absolution and justification are effected, let him be anathema.	No: Mark 16:16
15	If anyone says that a man who is born again and justified is bound ex fide to believe that he is certainly in the number of the predestined, let him be anathema.	Yes
16	If anyone says that he will for certain, with an absolute and infallible certainty, have that great gift of perseverance even to the end, unless he shall have learned this by a special revelation, let him be anathema.	Yes
17	If anyone says that the grace of justification is shared by those only who are predestined to life, but that all others who are called are called indeed but receive not grace, as if they are by divine power predestined to evil, let him be anathema.	Yes
18	If anyone says that the commandments of God are, even for one that is justified and constituted in grace, impossible to observe, let him be anathema.	No: Romans 7:18-21
19	If anyone says that nothing besides faith is commanded in the Gospel, that other things are indifferent, neither commanded nor forbidden, but free; or that the ten commandments in no way pertain to Christians, let him be anathema.	Yes
20	If anyone says that a man who is justified and however perfect is not bound to observe the commandments of God and the Church, but only to believe, as if the Gospel were a bare and absolute promise of eternal life without the condition of observing the commandments, let him be anathema.	Yes
21	If anyone says that Christ Jesus was given by God to men as a redeemer in whom to trust, and not also as a legislator whom to obey, let him be anathema.	Yes
22	If anyone says that the one justified either can without the special help of God persevere in the justice received, or that with that help he cannot, let him be anathema.	?
23	If anyone says that a man once justified can sin no more, nor lose grace, and that therefore he that falls and sins was never truly justified; or on the contrary, that he can during his whole life avoid all sins, even those that are venial, except by a special privilege from God, as the Church holds in regard to the Blessed Virgin, let him be anathema.	?
24	If anyone says that the justice received is not preserved and also not increased before God through good works, but that those works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not the cause of its increase, let him be anathema.	No: Eph 2:10
25	If anyone says that in every good work the just man sins at least venially, or, what is more intolerable, mortally, and hence merits eternal punishment, and that he is not damned for this reason only, because God does not impute these works into damnation, let him be anathema.	No: Romans 3:28
26	If anyone says that the just ought not for the good works done in God to expect and hope for an eternal reward from God through His mercy and the merit of Jesus Christ, if by doing well and by keeping the divine commandments they persevere to the end, let him be anathema.	Yes

Catholic Canons & The Bible, conclusion

Canon	Roman Catholic Canonical Statement	Biblical?
27	If anyone says that there is no mortal sin except that of unbelief, or that grace once received is not lost through any other sin however grievous and enormous except by that of unbelief, let him be anathema.	No: Heb 3:19
28	If anyone says that with the loss of grace through sin faith is also lost with it, or that the faith which remains is not a true faith, though it is not a living one, or that he who has faith without charity is not a Christian, let him be anathema.	?
29	If anyone says that he who has fallen after baptism cannot by the grace of God rise again, or that he can indeed recover again the lost justice but by faith alone without the sacrament of penance, contrary to what the holy Roman and Universal Church, instructed by Christ the Lord and His Apostles, has hitherto professed, observed and taught, let him be anathema.	?
30	If anyone says that after the reception of the grace of justification the guilt is so remitted and the debt of eternal punishment so blotted out to every repentant sinner, that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be discharged either in this world or in purgatory before the gates of heaven can be opened, let him be anathema.	No: Mark 1:4
31	If anyone says that the one justified sins when he performs good works with a view to an eternal reward, let him be anathema.	No: Romans 11:6
32	If anyone says that the good works of the one justified are in such manner the gifts of God that they are not also the good merits of him justified; or that the one justified by the good works that he performs by the grace of God and the merit of Jesus Christ, whose living member he is, does not truly merit an increase of grace, eternal life, and in case he dies in grace, the attainment of eternal life itself and also an increase of glory, let him be anathema	No Romans 11:5, 6
33	If anyone says that the Catholic doctrine of justification as set forth by the holy council in the present decree, derogates in some respect from the glory of God or the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, and does not rather illustrate the truth of our faith and no less the glory of God and of Christ Jesus, let him be anathema.	No: Requires all Canons to be Biblical

Of the twenty-seven Roman Catholic *Canons Concerning Justification* which were conclusive (six of the thirty-three were unclear), thirteen are Biblical, fourteen not. What does this mean for someone who is in Catholic Church? First, and foremost, it does not mean that all Catholics will be lost on the day of Judgment. God’s Word still stands, if any person “confesses with their mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believes in their heart that God raised him from the dead, that person will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.” (Romans 10:9-10). Adhering to “church doctrine,” like “church membership” does not save a person on the Last Day. Faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to be saved (Mark 16:16).

While we are not in confessional, or complete Scriptural agreement with the Catholic Church, because the Catholic church holds to these and other documented anti-Biblical doctrines, we do not turn our backs on them. We continue to witness to them with the truth - by our words and with our lives. We continue to pray for them. We also encourage them to compare what their church teaches to the clear teachings of God’s Word.

Editor’s Note: Some time in the future, it would be an interesting study to review the six unclear canonical statements in the light of Scripture, as well as the Confessions. Keep watch for this opportunity. In the meantime, the Sunday morning class is studying the book, “Respectable Sins.” After the first of the year, the Wednesday evening class will resume with a study of the newly revised New International Version of the Bible.

CORNER

DEVOTIONAL



When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?” Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.”

Matthew 11:2-5

“Look at the Evidence”

John the Baptist was in prison. His ministry was over. His future was uncertain. As a result, his confidence was shaken, and doubts began to arise.

From time to time I can relate to John’s experience. My life may take a dramatic turn. Sickness may come. Financial challenges may arise. Even the pressures of day to day life could plant the seeds of doubt. No one is immune. Even when I say I trust in the Lord, there may be those times when I question his love and care for me.

This is when I need to be on my guard. Satan wants to take my doubt and transform it into despair. The only protection against his deceptive devices is to hold firmly to the truth. This is what John desired, and what Jesus provided. His answer to John’s question was simple. “Look at the evidence.”

Jesus’ didn’t ask John, “What do you think?” Nor did he say, “What do your feelings tell you?” Neither did he offer John a “feel good slogan” promising better days to come. Jesus pointed John to the evidence and candidly said, “What do you see happening?” Jesus wanted John to consider the truth the evidence provided.

I need to look at the same evidence. The Lord went to great lengths to record all the prophecies concerning Jesus. Century after century, and generation after generation, God painstakingly said, “This is what the Savior would do.” The Lord, then, went to great lengths to record in similar detail, “This is what Jesus did do.” Here is the evidence I need. I don’t have to search inside me. I don’t have to go on a fact-finding mission. I don’t have to rely on my feelings. The evidence is there, and it is clear. Jesus came just as God had promised.

Not only did Jesus come, he also accomplished everything God required for my rescue. Jesus released me from the punishment of sin and the fear of death. He also did everything required to free me from the domination of the devil. The eye-witness account is recorded in the Bible. With complete confidence I can trust this testimony is the truth. With complete confidence I can be certain here is the reliable evidence I need to silence my doubts.

Prayer Thoughts

O gracious Lord, you have caused the Scriptures to be recorded for my blessing. Cause me to read them, learn them, and apply them to my life. In the end, make your truth the evidence I need to convince me Jesus is my Savior, my confidence for life, and my way to heaven. Amen!

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