



## HOLY HERESY 3: CHRIST ALONE (SOLUS CHRISTUS) FEBRUARY 26/27, 2025

Philippians 2:5-11

*<sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

*Solus Christus (Christ Alone): Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and humanity, and that salvation is accomplished solely through His life, death, and resurrection—without the need for additional mediators, works, or ecclesiastical intervention.*

- I. Biblical Foundations of *Solus Christus*
  - a. The concept that Christ alone is the mediator between God and man is clearly presented in Scripture. Key passages include:
    - i. 1 Timothy 2:5 – *"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."*
    - ii. John 14:6 – *"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"*
    - iii. Acts 4:12 – *"And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*

- iv. Hebrews 9:12 – *"He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption."*
  - b. These passages affirm that salvation is through Christ alone and that His sacrifice is final and sufficient.
- II. Early Church and Patristic Thought
  - a. The early church fathers emphasized Christ as the sole redeemer and mediator, though they did not use the exact phrase *Solus Christus*.
  - b. Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35–108 AD) wrote: *"Jesus Christ is the door of the Father, through which Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets enter, as well as the apostles and the church"* (*Letter to the Philadelphians*, 9).
  - c. Athanasius (c. 296–373 AD) in *On the Incarnation* emphasized Christ's exclusive role in salvation: *"The Word took flesh so that he might offer himself for us as a sacrifice and redeem humanity from sin and death."*
  - d. Augustine of Hippo (354–430 AD) wrote against any notion that salvation could be attained apart from Christ: *"There is no one who delivers us from our mortal condition except Christ alone, who is both God and man."* (*City of God*, 10.24)
  - e. These early theologians laid the foundation for *Solus Christus* by affirming that salvation is only in Christ and His atoning work.
- III. Medieval Developments: The Rise of Additional Mediators (*Jesus and /or/ plus "X"*)
  - a. By the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church had developed doctrines that added intermediaries between believers and Christ, including:
    - i. The Priesthood – Teaching that priests mediate grace through the sacraments, particularly the Mass.
    - ii. The Sacraments – Declaring that participation in sacraments was necessary for salvation.
    - iii. Mary and the Saints – Promoting intercessory prayers to Mary and the saints as additional mediators before God.
  - b. These teachings diminished the sufficiency of Christ and led Reformers to emphasize *Solus Christus*. The Reformers emphasized *Solus Christus* to counter Roman Catholic teachings that:
    - i. The Church and Sacraments Were Necessary for Salvation – The Catholic Church taught that salvation came through the sacraments administered by priests.
    - ii. The Mass as a Repeated Sacrifice – The Catholic doctrine of the Mass implied that Christ's sacrifice was ongoing rather than completed "once for all" (*Hebrews 10:12*).
- IV. *Solus Christus* in the Protestant Reformation
  - a. The doctrine of *Solus Christus* became central in the 16th-century Reformation, particularly in the teachings of Martin Luther and John Calvin.
  - b. Martin Luther (1483–1546)
    - i. Luther rejected the idea that priests, popes, or saints were necessary for salvation, insisting that Christ alone mediates between God and man:

*"There is no other priest, no other sacrifice, no other way to approach God, but through Jesus Christ alone." (The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, 1520)*

- ii. Luther also argued that Christ's righteousness alone justifies sinners, rejecting the Catholic system of merit and indulgences: "The first and chief article is this: Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, died for our sins and was raised again for our justification. He alone is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."
- iii. Luther fiercely opposed the idea that human works or church sacraments could contribute to salvation. He argued that Christ's atonement is fully sufficient: *"Christ took upon himself the sins of all men and made satisfaction for them with his own blood."* (LW 26:282)
- iv. Luther rejected the Roman Catholic teaching that the church or its priests could serve as mediators between God and humanity. Instead, he emphasized that Christ is the one and only mediator, as stated in 1 Timothy 2:5: *"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."* (1 Timothy 2:5, ESV)
- c. John Calvin (1509–1564)
  - i. Calvin taught that Christ is the sole source of redemption: *"For we are directed to Christ alone, that we may seek salvation in him, which is placed in his death and resurrection alone."* (Institutes of the Christian Religion, 2.16.1)
  - ii. Calvin echoed this in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, arguing that Christ alone intercedes for believers: *"For he is the only priest, and the priesthood being changed, the law is necessarily changed also. And he himself is the only sacrifice, for by his death he has abolished all others."* (Institutes, 2.15.6). This directly opposed the Roman Catholic doctrine of priestly mediation through the Mass and confession.
  - iii. Calvin affirmed that Christ's once-for-all sacrifice was sufficient for salvation, rejecting the continual sacrifices of the Mass. Calvin pointed to Hebrews 10:12 to argue that Christ's sacrifice is final and complete: *"But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God."* (Hebrews 10:12, ESV).

#### V. The Theological Implications of *Solus Christus*

- a. Salvation is by Christ's work alone – Human works or church rituals cannot contribute to salvation.
- b. Christ's atonement is fully sufficient – His sacrifice was once for all, making further sacrifices unnecessary.
- c. No human mediator is needed – Believers have direct access to God through Christ.
- d. The Church serves Christ, not replaces Him – The authority of the Church is secondary to the authority of Christ and His Word.

VI. Why *Solus Christus* Matters

- a. *Solus Christus* remains essential today as it affirms that:
  - i. Jesus alone saves.
  - ii. Faith in Christ alone is the only way to God.
  - iii. Christ's work is final and sufficient.
- b. Any attempt to add to Christ's work—through human efforts, religious institutions, or additional mediators—undermines the sufficiency of His grace. *Solus Christus* is the foundation of Christian faith, ensuring that all glory belongs to Christ alone.

\*\*\*\*\*

<sup>66</sup> *After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.* <sup>67</sup> *So Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?"* <sup>68</sup> *Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life,* <sup>69</sup> *and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."* (John 6:66-69)