

# Roman Catholicism vs. Biblical Christianity

## A Brief History

*\*Notes compiled from the book Church History in Plain Language; Bruce L. Shelley*

- 0. **70 AD to 312 AD is known as the Age of Catholic Christianity. It was during this time the command of Matthew 28: 19-20 was being developed. (Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.)**
- 0. **Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, was the first to coin the word “Catholic Church.” This was to suggest that it was universal, in spite of pagan ridicule and Roman persecution. To face the challenges of their times Christians turned increasingly to their bishops for spiritual leadership.**
- 0.
- 0. *Christianity, as we have seen, began as a tiny offshoot of Judaism. Three hundred years later it became the favored and eventually the official religion of the entire Roman Empire. Despite widespread and determined efforts to eliminate the new faith, it survived and grew. By the reign of Constantine (312-337) the first Christian emperor, there were churches in every large town in the empire and in places as distant from each other as Britain, Carthage, and Persia. [p.42]*
- 0.

0. **The movement of Christianity took a westward turn. Rome, being the heart of the vast empire by drawing peoples from all regions, was the “resting place” or area of authority with the church. This is where the leadership assumed authority in Christian affairs.**
0. **By the late second century, bishops in the church were gaining much power and were left unchallenged with the affairs of the church.**
0. **As anti-church groups came about (such as the Gnostics, who believed that Jesus entrusted a secret wisdom to certain teachers before He ascended), the leadership of the Catholic church was forced to make bold statements. One such statement was from Bishop Cyprian of Carthage, who declared “Outside the church there is no salvation.”**
0. **As time went on, the Catholic church grew in prominence and control over the people. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the church achieved an incomparable power and majesty. By this time the rule of the papal office had firmly been established. An example of the power that popes had was in Innocent III.**
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0. *[Pope] Innocent III told the princes of Europe that the papacy was like the sun, while kings were like the moon. As the moon received its light from the sun, so kings derived their powers from the pope. The papacy’s chief weapons in support of this authority were spiritual penalties. Almost everyone believed in heaven and hell and in the pope’s management of the grace to get to one and avoid the other. Thus, the pope’s first weapon in bringing peasants and princes to their knees was the threat of excommunication. He could pronounce their anathema (horror) and they would be “set apart” from the church, deprived of the grace essential for salvation. [p. 245]*
- 0.
0. **Holding the power over the people, the papal office during the thirteenth century led Christianity to its peak of political and cultural influence. The pope claimed power over the**

holy cause in history and also authority over the souls of men even in eternity.

- 0. During the late 1300's an outcry began against the Catholic Church.
- 0. Two individuals began to question the idea that the Christian Church was something other than a visible organization on earth headed by the pope. These two individuals were John Wycliffe, and John Hus.
- 0. Wycliffe began teaching that "Every man, therefore, priest or layman, holds an equal place in the eyes of God." He also contended that "The pope should be the shepherd of the flock and the preacher who brings men to Christ."
- 0.
- 0. *In a steady stream of charges Wycliffe showed how far the papacy had departed from the simple faith and practice of Christ and his disciples. "Christ is truth," he wrote, "the pope is the principle of falsehood, Christ lived in poverty, the pope labors for worldly magnificence. Christ refused temporal dominion, the pope seeks it."*
- 0. *The papal institution is "full of poison." It is Antichrist itself, the man of sin who exalts himself above God. Let judgment fall! [p. 245]*
- 0.
- 0. Another major point that Wycliffe made was that every man had the right to examine the Bible for himself. He stated: "The New Testament is of full authority, and open to the understanding of simple men...Christ did not write His laws on tables, or on skins of animals, but in the hearts of men."
- 0. The years of 1517-1648 are known as the years of reformation. During this time the people believed that the papacy was essential, not only for the religious life of men but as a means of sanctioning political rule.
- 0. This is also known as the age of Protestantism. The answers to four essential questions came

about during this transition. 1) How is a person saved? 2) Where does religious authority lie? 3) What is the church? 4) What is the essence of Christian living?

0. Martin Luther spoke out against the papacy.

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0. *Born in 1483, the son of a Saxon miner, Luther had every intention of becoming a lawyer until, one day in 1505, he was caught in a thunderstorm while walking toward the village of Stotternheim. A bolt of lightning knocked him to the ground, and Luther, terrified called out to Catholicism's patroness of miners: "St. Anne, save me! And I'll become a monk."*

0. *Much to his parents' dismay, Luther kept the vow. Two weeks later, obsessed with guilt, he entered the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt and proved to be a dedicated monk. "I kept the rule so strictly," he recalled years later, "that I may say that if ever a monk got to heaven by his sheer monkery, it was I. If I had kept on any longer, I should have killed myself with vigils, prayers, reading and other work."*

0. *Luther pushed his body to health-cracking rigors of austerity. He sometimes fasted for three days and slept without a blanket in freezing winter. He was driven by a profound sense of his own sinfulness and of God's unutterable majesty. In the midst of saying his first Mass, said Luther, "I was utterly stupefied and terror-stricken. I thought to myself, "Who am I that I should lift up mine eyes or raise my hands to the divine majesty? For I am dust and ashes and full of sin, and I am speaking to the living and eternal and true God." No amount of penance, no soothing advice from his superiors could still Luther's conviction that he was a miserable doomed sinner. Although his confessor counseled him to love God, Luther one day burst out, "I do not love God! I hate Him!"*

0. *The troubled monk found the love he sought through the study of Scripture. Assigned to the*

*chair of Biblical studies at the recently established Wittenberg University,...A new and revolutionary*

- 0. *picture of God began to develop in Luther's restless soul. Finally, in 1515...Luther saw it clearly now. Man is saved only by his faith in the merit of Christ's sacrifice. The cross alone can remove man's sin and save him from the grasp of the devil.*
- 0. *The implications of Luther's discovery were enormous. If salvation comes through faith in Christ alone, the intercession of priests is superfluous. Faith formed and nurtured by the Word of God written and preached, requires no monks, no masses, no prayers to the saints. The mediation of the Church of Rome crumbles into insignificance. [p. 256-8]*
- 0.
- 0. **Although Luther faced much opposition he continued to stand on two convictions: First, salvation was by faith in Christ alone, and second, the Scriptures, not popes or councils, are the standard for Christian faith and behavior.**
- 0. **Luther took four essential Catholic concerns and offered invigorating new answers: 1) How is a person saved? By faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, not by works. 2) Where does religious authority lie? God's Holy and inspired Word. 3) What is the church? The entire community of Christian believers. 4) What is the essence of Christian living? Allowing God's Holy Spirit to empower you in order to serve and walk with God.**

## **Comparison of Beliefs**

*\* Taken from Roman Catholicism: Scripture vs. Tradition*

### **The Doctrine of Jesus**

**The Bible**  
*(New American Standard Bible)*

**The Roman Catholic Church**  
*(Catechism)*

**Jesus the Savior:**

**Titus 3:5**

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,

**Ephesians 2:8-9**

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.

RCC teaches that “by His death and resurrection, He has opened heaven to us” (1026). Each person who receives the Holy Spirit, good works (14

**Jesus the Redeemer:**

**1 Peter 1:17-19**

And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

RCC teaches that Mary is the sinners’ Advocate. She did so in order to serve the mystical Body of Christ. Obedient she became the cause of our redemption for the human race" (494).

**Jesus the Redeemer: Jesus our Advocate and only Mediator**

**1 Timothy 2:5**

For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

**1 John 2:1**

My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

RCC teaches that Mary “did not cease to intercede for us. Her manifold intercession continues to this day. She “is ...Advocate... and Mediatrix of all graces” (541).

## **Jesus, Head of the Church:**

### **Ephesians 1:22-23**

And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

RCC teaches that the Pope, “by as pastor of the entire Church he the whole Church, a power which (882). He exercises infallibility in doctrine pertaining to faith or morals.”

## **Jesus the soon-coming King:**

### **Acts 1:11**

and they also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”

RCC denies this by teaching that churches to be worshipped: “The Lord Jesus Christ...is truly, really and substantially present in the Eucharist (1374-1378)”

## **Christ's Work**

### **Jesus is the propitiation for our sin**

#### **1 John 2:2**

and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

#### **1 John 4:10**

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

RCC teaches that sins are expiated by “cleansing fire” and that we “must be cleansed from all unrighteousness by the grace of God” (1030, 31; 1470)

### **Jesus finished the work of redemption**

#### **Hebrews 10:14**

For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

#### **Hebrews 7:27-28**

RCC denies it is finished. “The Eucharist are one single sacrifice offered once in bloody manner on the altar of the cross.”

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. 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.

an unbloody manner" (1367). "work of our redemption is carried out by the offering of reparation for the sins of the living and the dead"

### **His life, death, and resurrection provide the only way to be**

#### **Acts 4:12**

"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."

RCC denies this by claiming the "only way to salvation" (846) and claiming "that we do not acknowledge the Creator, in the same manner as the pagans" (841).

### **His shed blood is the only remission for sins**

#### **Hebrews 9:22**

And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

RCC teaches "an indulgence is granted for sins whose punishment due to sins whose Communion cannot be applied to the living or the dead"

#### **Hebrews 10:18**

Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.

### **Jesus cleanses us from sin**

#### **Hebrews 1:3**

And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high;

RCC teaches that "all who die imperfectly purified...undergo purification necessary to enter the joy of heaven"

#### **Colossians 1:22**

yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—

# Doctrine of Salvation

## Salvation is proclaimed in the Gospel

### **Romans 1:16**

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.

### **1 Corinthians 15:1-4**

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

RCC preaches a different gospel salvation, including: the Sacrament of church membership (846), purgatory, baptism (1256).

### **Galatians 1:9**

As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.

## Salvation is of God, not man

### **Ephesians 1:13**

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation— having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,

RCC teaches “Baptism is the seal of the Kingdom of God, and one can enter the Kingdom of God only through baptism.”

### **John 1:13**

who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

## Salvation is through faith, not works

### **Ephesians 2:8-9**

RCC teaches salvation through works.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.

**Psalms 49:7-8**

No man can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him— For the redemption of his soul is costly, and he should cease trying forever—

**Salvation is by grace, not merit**

**Romans 3:24**

being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

**Romans 11:6**

But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

salvation and at the same time of good works and indulgences (14

RCC denies justifying grace is t for others all the graces needed t

**2 Thessalonians 1:8-9**

dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

**Salvation rejected is Hell**

RCC teaches that “Immediately state of mortal sin descend into l

# The Doctrine of Justification

**Justification, what is it? - The act of pronouncing righteous, acquittal**

**Romans 5:18 says:**

**So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.**

**The Roman Catholic Church teaches a different doctrine on justification compared to that of Biblical Christianity.**

| <b>Biblical Doctrine</b>  | <b>Roman Catholic Doctrine</b>                              |
|---|---|
| Justification is God's act of declaring a sinner righteous by faith                   | Justification is God's act of making one obedient           |
| Christ's imputed righteousness makes the believer acceptable to God                   | Infused sanctifying grace through the sacraments            |
| Justification is received by faith alone  | Justification is achieved by faith plus works               |
| Justification enables God to see the sinner as if he were just                        | Justification is granted to the sinner when he is obedient  |
| Justification cannot increase since the ground is the perfect righteousness of Christ | Justification can be increased by receiving more sacraments |
| Justification is a permanent verdict and is not affected by sin                       | Justification is affected by sin                            |
| Justification comes at the moment of faith in Jesus Christ                            | Final justification is not determined until death           |
| Emphasis is on God's verdict  | Emphasis is on the sacraments                               |

# Dogmas Declared by the Roman Catholic Church

Here are some Doctrines or Dogmas declared by the Roman Catholic Church. These Dogmas violate the teaching of Scripture.

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Statement</b>   |
|-------------|--|
| 437         | Proclamation that infant baptism regenerates the soul                    |
| 500         | The Mass instituted as a re-sacrifice of Jesus for the remission of sins |
| 593         | Declaration that sins need to be purged, established by Pope Gregory I   |

|      |  |
|------|--|
| 600  | Prayers directed to Mary, dead saints, and angels                    |
| 786  | Worship of cross, images, and relics authorized                      |
| 995  | Canonization of dead people as saints initiated by Pope John XV      |
| 1000 | Attendance at Mass made mandatory under the penalty of mortal sin    |
| 1079 | Celibacy of priesthood, decreed by Pope Gregory VII                  |
| 1090 | Rosary, repetitious praying with beads, invented by Peter the Hermit |
| 1184 | The Inquisition, instituted by the Council of Verona                 |
| 1190 | The sale of Indulgences established to reduce time in Purgatory      |
|      | Transubstantiation, proclaimed by Pope Innocent III                  |

|      |   |
|------|---|
| 1215 |   |
| 1215 | Confession of sins to priests, instituted by Pope Innocent III              |
| 1229 | Bible placed on Index of Forbidden Books in Toulouse                        |
| 1438 | Purgatory elevated from doctrine to dogma by Council of Florence            |
| 1545 | Tradition claimed equal in authority with the Bible by the Council of Trent |
| 1546 | Apocryphal Books declared cannon by Council of Trent                        |
| 1854 | Immaculate Conception of Mary, proclaimed by Pope Pius IX                   |
| 1870 | Infallibility of the Pope, proclaimed by Vatican Council                    |
| 1922 | Virgin Mary proclaimed co-redeemer with Jesus by Pope Benedict XV           |

# Mary Glorified by the Roman Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church places Mary, mother of Jesus, in a position of Deity. Listed are some of the prayers offered to Mary.

## **Hail Mary**

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb, Jesus, Whom you conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. Holy Mary Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.*

## **Hail, Holy Queen**

*Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us. And after this our exile, show unto us the blessed Fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.*

## **The Memorare of St. Bernard**

*Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that nay one who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, and sought thy intercession, was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of Virgins, my Mother; to thee I come; before thee I stand sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy, hear and answer me. Amen.*

**Cardinal and Saint Apphonsus de Liquori wrote a book entitled The Glories of Mary. The chapter titles ascribe attributes and titles that belong to Christ alone. Some of the titles are:**

- 0. Mary, Our Hope**
- 0. Mary, Our Help**
- 0. Mary, Our Salvation**
- 0. Mary, Our Life**
- 0. Mary, Our Advocate**

## **Sharing the Gospel**

- 0. Here are a few reminders when sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to Catholics.**
- 0. Share your personal testimony. How did Jesus Christ make a difference in your life?**
- 0. Know the truth and try to establish what truth is (John 14:6, 17:17; Colossians 1:5)**
- 0. Share with the individual that God's Word is the final authority on salvation (2 Timothy 3:15)**
- 0. Show the proper place of tradition with the position of authority (Mark 7:7-8, 13)**
- 0. Discuss the depravity of man (Romans 3:10-26)**
- 0. Agree what the Gospel of Christ is and its power in the life of the believer (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, Ephesians 2:1-10)**
- 0. Discuss the consequences of someone teaching a different gospel or refusing to believe the true Gospel (Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Corinthians 4:3)**
- 0. Talk about Jesus**
- 0. Talk about Jesus**
- 0. Talk about Jesus**
- 0. Finally, talk about Jesus**

# What Do You Believe?

Use Scripture to support your position on each of the following questions.

**1. As Christians, can we be assured during this lifetime that we will spend eternity with God?**

Salvation is dependent on who God is and what He has done. When we trust Christ as our personal savior, the Holy Spirit places us in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:3). Scripture tells us that we are sealed with the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). To “lose” salvation would mean to break the seal that God has put in place. It is the Father’s purpose to keep us safe until we come into His presence (John 10:28-30; 13:1 and Jude 24).

**2. What is the Trinity?**

You probably know that the word “trinity” is not found in the Bible. Charles C. Ryrie says this:

*Any concept of the Trinity must be carefully balanced, for it must maintain on the one side the unity of God, and on the other, the distinctness and equality of the Persons. That is why the word “trinity” only tells half of the doctrine - the “threeness” part and not the unity. Perhaps the word “triunity” is better since it contains both ideas - the “tri” (the threeness) and “unity” (the oneness). [Ryrie, A Survey of Bible Doctrine p. 30]*

The following is evidence for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit being God: (Listed are just a few references.)

**Father: John 6:27, 1 Peter 1:2** (note that it is seldom debated that the Father is God)

**Jesus Christ: John 20:28, Matthew 9:4, Matthew 28:18 & 20, Mark 2:1-12;**

**Holy Spirit: Acts 5:3-4, 1 Corinthians 2:10; Psalm 139:7, John 3:5-6, 8.**

**It is very important to remember that God is infinite and we are finite. There are some aspects of God's character that are true, yet difficult to explain. As obedient followers of God, we need to take by faith these characteristics that seem abstract.**

### **3. What is God like?**

**Here are just a few characteristics of our God.**

**God is Omniscient (God knows everything): Isaiah 40:28; 45:21, Psalm 147:4-5, Acts 15:18.**

**God is Holy: 1 Peter 1:15, 1 John 3:3, Leviticus 11:44, Hosea 11:9.**

**God is Just: Psalm 19:9; 116:5; 145:17, Jeremiah 12:1.**

**God is Love: 1 John 3:16; 4:8-10, Romans 5:8.**

**God is Immutable (He never changes): Malachi 3:6, Isaiah 46:9 -10, James 1:17.**

### **4. What is the significance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ?**

**The resurrection to Jesus Christ is significant for many reasons. Here are a few: The resurrection proved the validity of Christ's claims to be God (Acts 2:30-31). It is a guarantee of our forgiveness (1 Corinthians 15:17). The resurrection provides the believer with power to live**

the Christian life during this time on earth (Ephesians 1:19-22).

**5. Did Jesus Christ exist before He was born in Bethlehem?**

**Here are a few Scripture references that indicate that Christ did exist from eternity past: Micah 5:2, Habakkuk 1:12, Isaiah 9:6, John 8:58, Exodus 3:14-15, Colossians 1:16**

## **Glossary of Catholic Terms**

*Taken from Roman Catholicism: Scripture vs. Tradition  
With references from the Catholic Catechism, 1994*

**Apocrypha:** Fifteen writings recorded during the 400 years between the Old and New Testaments. Twelve of them were declared inspired and added to the Catholic Canon in 1546.

**Apparition:** The perception of a disembodied person often associated with an urgent message. The Vatican has authenticated many visual and audible encounters with the Virgin Mary throughout the world.

**Doctrine:** A principle or body of principles presented for acceptance or belief.

**Dogma:** A doctrine or a corpus of doctrines relating to matters such as morality and faith, set

**forth in an authoritative manner by a church.**

**Eucharist: A wafer claimed to contain the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ (1374), that is to be worshipped, consumed, and sacrificed (1378).**

**Indulgence: The means of remission of the temporal punishment for sins. It is gained by good works and can be applied to the sins of the living and the dead (1471-79).**

**Infallible teachings: The pope and bishops are incapable of error when proclaiming a definitive doctrine pertaining to faith and morals (891).**

**Mass: The continuation of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ at Calvary (1367) which carries on the work of redemption (1405), appeases the wrath of God and atones for the sins of the living and the dead (1371, 1414).**

**Mortal sin: A grave sin committed with full knowledge and consent (1857). Those who die in this state descend into hell (1035).**

**Penance: The sacrament of confessing sins committed after baptism to a priest for forgiveness and reconciliation to God and the Church (1456).**

**Purgatory: A place where those who die in God's grace are punished and purified by fire for sins that have already been forgiven (1030-32, 1471).**

**Rosary: An expression of devotion to Mary, developed in the 11th century by Peter the Hermit, using beads to count 53 repetitious prayers to Mary, six to the Father, and six to the Trinity.**

**Sacraments: Seven efficacious signs of grace that are necessary for salvation and by which divine life is dispensed (1129).**

**Venial sin: A sin that merits only temporal punishment and does not deprive the sinner of grace, fellowship with God or eternal happiness.**