

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

ANSWERING DENOMINATIONAL DOCTRINES “Catholicism”

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith” (1 Tim. 4:1). Welcome to our study of Answering Denominational Doctrines. In this series of lessons we are examining the doctrines of prominent denominations compared to the Word of God in order to see if they line up. Today we will be looking at Catholic doctrine. Is the Catholic Church the church about which we read in the New Testament? Does the Catholic Church have the right to give or take away salvation? Are the papacy, worship of Mary, and other things of a similar nature what God wants in the New Testament? Can a person take the New Testament, and the end result be the Catholic Church? Absolutely not! The New Testament does not produce the Catholic Church. A departure from the New Testament created the Catholic Church. You cannot take the New Testament, read it, and end up with the Catholic Church. Those who departed from reading the New Testament, and who departed from the commands of God, created the Catholic Church. Can we see in the New Testament the seeds of apostasy that led to Catholicism? Absolutely.

Here are three very clear roots of apostasy from which the roots of Catholicism came. The first seed has to do with the fact that Catholicism places the teachings of men (both oral and written traditions) above (or equal to) the commandments of God. Are the seeds of that found in the New Testament? Yes, they were. Notice Matthew 15:7-9 where Jesus teaches that we cannot put commandments of men or oral tradition above God’s commands.

“Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying, ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’”

Catholicism exalts oral tradition, along with writings and edicts of the popes and the Word of God, and places all of them on a level plane. In Matthew 15:7-9 we see some of the initial seeds of apostasy. The Pharisees were following commandments and traditions of men, not God. As a result, Jesus condemned them as hypocrites. Catholicism does the same thing today.

A second seed is the forbidding of people to marry and forbidding people to eat certain foods, which began in the first century. There were people then who were saying that certain people could not marry, and that certain foods could not be eaten. Today, Catholicism teaches celibacy, and that it is wrong to eat certain foods on certain days. Notice 1 Timothy 4:1-4.

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving.”

The Catholic Church clearly teaches that their supposed “priests” cannot marry. Where does the Bible say that? It doesn’t. The Bible says nothing about that. So where does it come from? It comes from a departure from the faith. What about not eating certain foods? The Bible does not say anything about that either. “Every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused.” So how did such doctrines come about? They arose from the seeds of error that already were being taught in New Testament times, and that led to a departure from the faith that we know today as Catholicism.

A third seed is found in 3 John 9-11. John wrote to the church about how Diotrophes, who “loved to have the preeminence, would not receive us.” What is the seed here? It is the initial seeds of the beginning of the papacy. One man (a “head elder”?) wanted the power and authority. Ignatius of Antioch, around A.D. 100 to 150, made the first distinction between bishops and elders. But earlier Diotrophes already wanted such power and preeminence—which ultimately led to one man, the pope, being the supposed head of God’s church today. What do we initially learn about Catholic doctrine? It is not the product of the New Testament, but is the result of a departure from the New Testament.

Another error associated with Catholicism is its faulty view of Scripture. Concerning Scripture, Catholic writer John O’Brien, in his book, *The Faith of Millions* (published by Our Sunday Visitor, Inc.), which is a sort of guide for “lay” Catholics, said,

“From all of which it must be abundantly clear that the Bible alone is not a safe and competent guide because it is not now, and has never been, accessible to all, because it is not clear and intelligible to all, and because it does not contain all the truth of the Christian religion.”

Can you believe such a brazen statement as that?! “The Bible alone is not a safe and competent guide” or “it not accessible to all because it is not clear and intelligible to all,” or “it does not contain all the truth of the Christian religion.” Stop and think about such statements. Why would Catholicism want you to think that the Bible does not contain all truth, is not intelligible, is not clear, and does not present you with enough information about the Christian religion? It is because if people started reading the Bible for themselves, and began to realize that they **can** understand and know it, and they then start doing what it says, it would eradicate Catholicism around the world. Catholics do not want people to study the Bible because studying of God’s Word does not align with practices of Catholicism.

Here’s the big problem. Catholicism says that the Bible “is not our only guide.” But the Bible says it is! Colossians 3:17 says, “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” Must we do **everything** according to God’s authority? Absolutely! Where are we told that? The Spirit expressly said that in latter times some would depart from the faith. But God, “who in these last days spoken to us by His Son...” (Heb. 1:1-2). Where? In the Word of God. The Scripture teaches in John 17:17 that God’s Word is all truth. Catholicism clearly says that the Bible does **not** contain all truth. The Bible says that it **does**. Jesus said, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” Someone might say, “Well, we do not have all the truth.” That is wrong. In John 16:13 Jesus said, “When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into **all** truth.” Did the Spirit come? Absolutely. In Acts 2 we see the Holy Spirit descending on the apostles. And from that point forward they began to reveal “all truth.” What is interesting is that at the close of the New Testament the Bible says that we now have “all truth.” We are to “contend earnestly for the faith which was **once for all** delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). The Bible is our only authority, and is to be what we follow. We **do** have “all truth.” And the Bible says that we **can** read it and understand it. Notice Ephesians 3:4—“By which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of

Christ.” Combine that idea with 2 Peter 1:3, which says that God, by His divine power, “has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue.” What do these two verses, placed side by side, tell us? They tell us that when we read the Bible, we can understand it. And they tell us that it is everything we need to be right with God and get to Heaven. The Bible is to be our only guide. We do not need the edicts of church fathers or the ideas or commandments of the pope. Rather, we need the Word of God alone, which can save us. Any religious group that tells you that the Bible is not enough is not from God because God said the exact opposite.

Another doctrine of Catholicism that we want to answer is that Catholicism teaches that the Catholic Church is a source of religious authority. In O’Brien’s book, *The Faith of Millions*, he illustrates this point when he writes,

“The simple fact is that the Bible, like all dead letters, calls for a living interpreter. Just as the Supreme Court is the authorized living interpreter of the Constitution, so the Catholic Church is the living, authoritative interpreter of the Bible.”

Where does Scripture say that the Catholic Church is the “living, authoritative interpreter of the Bible”? You can read from Genesis to Revelation, and you will never find such a statement. Why would someone say that? It is because if we read passages such as Matthew 23:9, where Jesus clearly said in discussing religious leaders, “Call no man ‘Father,’” but the Catholic Church calls their priests “Father.” How can we possibly combine those two ideas? People need to go to Catholic priests and allow them to explain why what the Bible says does not line up with Catholic doctrine, and why people should listen to them instead of to the Bible. It is a deceptive and condemning idea to say, “You cannot understand the Bible. We have to be the one to tell you what it says.” That flies in the face of what Scripture says. Ephesians 5:17 says, “Do not be ignorant, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” We have a personal obligation to understand God’s will. Jesus said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn. 8:32). Jesus did not say, “These things are hard. You probably cannot understand them. The Catholic Church is your authoritative interpreter, and can make you free.” Instead, Jesus said that the truth is what will make us free. I want us to read Ephesians 3:4 again. Do not buy into the idea that you cannot read and understand your Bible. Ephesians 3:4 says, “By which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.” God clearly taught that a person **can** read and understand the things that Christ brought to us. So the Catholic Church is not the “living, authoritative interpreter” of God’s Word. The Bible is its own best interpreter. We need to ask, “What does the Scripture say?” (Rom. 4:3). We need to ask, “Is there any word from the Lord?” (Jer. 37:17). When we search the Scriptures daily, as Acts 17:11 says, we can know God’s will.

Another error of Catholicism is the idea that the pope has authority on all religious matters. Catholics believe that when the pope, in his official capacity, proclaims a doctrine of faith or morals that is binding on the whole church, he is preserved from making any type of error. Where does the Bible teach such a thing? Where is the authority in the first place for even having a pope? In Acts 14 and Acts 20 you read that there was a plurality of elders in every city. The only time we see a man trying to act like a pope (3 John 9), God condemned it. There is no authority in Scripture for a papacy. There is no authority to call any man “Father” (Mt. 23:9). And no man is perfect. In Romans 3:23 the Bible teaches that “all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.” The main answer to the existence of a pope is the Bible’s silence on the subject. I want to ask you a question: If, as we have already seen, the Bible is to be our only guide because it has “all truth,” where does the Bible say that it is acceptable to have a pope, and that he is preserved from making any

errors when he speaks on doctrines or morals? Someone might say, "I've read my Bible, and it doesn't say that." That is exactly the point! God tells us that we are not perfect, but that His will is perfect, and that we must follow it.

Another doctrine of Catholicism that is not in accord with the Scriptures is the idea of penance. Let me explain from the Catholics' own writings what that is. Catholics believe that the church has power to forgive all sins. This forgiveness of sins is believed to be a true sacrament instituted by Christ. It is different from baptism, particularly on account of its judicial form (which means that the Catholic Church can make decisions on this matter). Sins can be forgiven only by the sacrament of penance. Sins are forgiven by absolution (a total forgiveness), which can be given only by an authorized priest. Forgiving sins is a real, judicial pardon. And the Catholic Church has the power to "reserve certain cases."

God, however, is the only One Who can forgive sin. You never see in the Bible where anyone had the power to forgive sin outside of God. Yes, I may sin against others. And as I do what the Bible says, in line with the will of God, those people are bound to forgive me. But when we sin, God is the One Who forgives us of our sins. Nowhere in the Scripture do you see anything about the church having the power to "reserve certain cases." What does that mean? Even if a person is penitent, and even if he does the right thing, then he still might not be forgiven. The idea of penance came about in history when there was a need to gather money. You may remember the old saying, "As soon as the coins in the coffer do ring, so the souls out of Purgatory do spring." This expresses how penance was associated with money. The more you give, the more penance you can receive. Yes, you can get forgiveness. But it will cost you. It often was about greed, raising money, and using emotionalism to cause people to do what they did. Understand that it is God Who forgives sins, not the Catholic Church. In Acts 2:38 Peter said, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." In 1 John 1:9 we are told, "If we confess our sins, He [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." God is the source of the forgiveness of sins. And nowhere do you read about "Catholic doctrine" or "penance" in Scripture. Such ideas originated with men, often were based on greed, and flies in the face of true repentance and the concept of God's forgiveness.

Another Catholic doctrine is the concept that the biblical mode of baptism is sprinkling. If you want to be baptized in the Catholic Church, it is likely that as a child you had a little water sprinkled on your head. Is that what the Bible says? Is sprinkling a biblical mode of baptism? Absolutely not! Sprinkling is not a biblical mode of how to be baptized correctly. Immersion is the correct biblical mode. Let me illustrate that. In Mark 1:9-11 Jesus is being baptized. He comes to John, and the Bible says, "And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove." The question is: In order to "come up out of water," what must a person first do? A person must "go down into the water." How was Jesus baptized? What mode did John use? It is clear that Jesus was immersed. In Acts 8:36ff. we see Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. The eunuch made the good confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. They then stopped the chariot, and both of them got down out of it. They went down into the water, Philip baptized the eunuch, and they came up out of the water—which is another clear picture of someone being immersed. Think about the way John the Immerser did it. In John 3:23 we read, "John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there." Think about that. How much water does it take to sprinkle someone? It doesn't take much. How much water does it take to pour a little water on someone's head? Not much. A cup or two would take care of that. How much water does it take for full-body immersion? It takes "much water." A final illustration is found in Romans 6:1-4, where Paul

was dealing with the idea of baptism. He said that baptism was a burial. Think about the last time you went to a funeral. A hole is dug in the ground. The casket is placed inside the hole, and is covered on the bottom and on all sides. Then the casket is covered completely. It is completely engulfed in the ground. That is the manner in which God chose to describe baptism. It is a burial. Someone might ask, "But what if children sin?" Isaiah 7:16 teaches us that there is a time when a child "learns to refuse the evil and choose the good." That is the age of accountability, before which a child is innocent. He is created in the image of God, and must reach a point where he knows what sin is. Here is how you can know for sure that sprinkling of babies is not a biblical mode of baptism. Doesn't the Bible teach that a person must believe in Jesus? Absolutely! In John 8:24 Jesus said, "If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." How many babies have the mental faculty to believe—as Jesus said that a person must? The Bible teaches that a person must make the good confession: "With the heart, one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:10). How many babies can say the words that the Ethiopian eunuch said in Acts 8:37? They cannot—because they can't speak. On and on we could go. Babies cannot repent. And so on. Thus, they are not candidates for biblical baptism. Nor do they need to obey the Gospel because they are in a safe state until they reach the age of accountability.

Another doctrine from Catholicism that I want to examine is the doctrine of exalting such people as Mary, Peter, "Mother Teresa," and others, when the Bible says that we should not worship people. Catholics exalt people like Mary and Peter, of which they have statues. They exalt "Mother Teresa," saying that she was "such a godly person." Should we make statues of those people? Should we exalt them? Should we pray to them? What does the Bible say about that? In Matthew 4:10 Jesus said, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve." In Revelation 19:10 John was in a state of awe because of the message of victory that he had just heard. So, he fell down at the feet of the angel who had delivered the message. But the angel said, "Do not do that. Worship God!" We must not worship anyone except God. We do not worship angels. In Acts 10 we see Peter, a prominent Jewish man who has been converted to Christianity, is taking the Gospel to Cornelius and his household (who were Gentiles). Cornelius is so thankful for Peter's coming that he falls down before him to worship him. What did Peter say? He did not say, "Kiss my ring, or see my funny hat." That is not what he said. Peter said, "Stand up; I myself am also a man" (vs. 26). The papacy is supposedly from the lineage of Peter. But Peter did not accept worship. He did not have people fall down in front of him and kiss his ring (or things of that nature). Such is not found in the Scriptures. We cannot worship other people. We cannot worship angels. We need to worship God only (Mt. 4:10).

Then we have the idea of the Catholic hierarchy of "clergy" and "laity," which is not at all found in the Scriptures. Where does it say in the Bible that there is a clergy/laity system which consists of things like a pope, archbishops, bishops, "fathers," etc.? Where do we find a "big me" and a "little you" in the Bible? There is no such concept in the Bible. One of the clearest concepts from Scripture concerning the errors of Catholicism is that Catholics are taught to call priests "Father." Is that biblical? Absolutely not! In Matthew 23:9 Jesus said, "Call no man 'Father.'" What did Jesus say regarding giving men religious titles so that people could look up to them? The Catholic Church says that people must call priests "Father." Jesus said, "Call no man 'Father.'" It comes down to whether we are going to do what the Catholic Church says, or whether we are going to do what Jesus said. The two are diametrically opposed to each other. A person cannot say, "I'm following Jesus," and be a part of the Catholic Church because it is not the church about which we read in the New Testament. In Philippians 1:1 we read of the saints, bishops, and deacons in Philippi. Elders are the spiritual overseers (leaders or shepherds, Acts 20:28) of the church.

Deacons are special servants appointed by God (1 Tim. 3). All individuals stand on level ground at the foot of Christ's cross. I need the blood of Jesus as much as the next person. There is no "big me" and "little you." We all are equal in God's sight. Romans 12:3-4 tells us that we are not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to. Even elders should not do that (1 Pet. 5). They are not to lead as dictators or lords, but as people who help those who are in need of God's mercy and grace.

When we look at the Bible, what do we see? We see that Catholicism does not line up with the Word of God. Let me be as plain and clear as I know how to be. You cannot follow Catholic doctrine and get to Heaven. Someone says, "You're judging." No, I'm not. In John 7:24 Jesus said that we are to "judge with righteous judgment." I am not judging you. God already has told us what the truth is. He already has made the judgment. He has said that we are not to exalt traditions of men. We are not to call any man "Father." God clearly taught that the Bible is our only authority. We must be immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins. We are not to worship other people. God has clearly taught all these things—which are diametrically opposed to the teachings of Catholicism. So, how can a person say, "I'm a member of the Catholic Church, and so I belong to the church about which we read in the New Testament"? Such is not possible. The Catholic Church is not a product of the New Testament, but is a departure from the faith.

The good news is that you can become a member of the New Testament church. You can become a part of the church of Christ. Jesus said, "I will build My church" (Mt. 16:18). The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is the one of which we read in the Bible. You can become a member of it today. Are you a part of the one church (Eph. 4:4)? How do you become a part of the Lord's church? What did the people do in the New Testament to become Christians and Christians only?

First, a person must hear the Word of God. Much of this lesson has been about our need to listen to God as the final authority. Romans 10:17 says, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." We must hear what God says, and we must hear Him alone. Then a person must believe in Jesus. It was Jesus Who said, "Unless you believe that I am He, you will surely die in your sins" (Jn. 8:24). Having believed, a person must be willing to repent. Jesus said, "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (Lk. 13:3). A person must make the good confession (Mt. 10:32-33). And a person must be immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mk. 16:16). I urge you not to get caught up in Catholicism. It is popular, and a lot of people buy into it. But it is not the church about which you read in the New Testament. If you have been a part of it, I am begging you to come out of it today. Become a New Testament Christian by obeying the Gospel of Christ.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “CATHOLICISM”

1. In 1 Timothy 4:1, what did the Holy Spirit predict would happen in the future?
2. This lesson discusses three “roots of apostasy from the truth” that led to the establishment of Catholicism. What was the first one?
3. This lesson discusses three “roots of apostasy from the truth” that led to the establishment of Catholicism. What was the second one?
4. This lesson discusses three “roots of apostasy from the truth” that led to the establishment of Catholicism. What was the third one?
5. In Matthew 15:7-9, what accusation did Jesus make against the scribes and Pharisees of His generation?
6. What two specific points are mentioned in 1 Timothy 4:1-4 that are discussed in this lesson as being associated with modern-day Catholicism?
7. According to 3 John 9-11, what had Diotrophes done that was unacceptable and sinful?
8. According to material discussed in this lesson, what did Ignatius of Antioch do around A.D. 100 to 150 that was unscriptural?
9. This lesson quotes Catholic writer John O’Brien’s book, *The Faith of Millions*, regarding the Catholic Church’s position on the Bible as God’s Word. According to O’Brien, what is that position?
10. According to John 17:17, what is God’s Word?
11. According to Jesus’ statement in John 16:13, when the Holy Spirit came, into what did He guide Christ’s apostles and other writers of the New Testament?
12. What two things does Jude 3 tell us about “the faith”?
13. According to Ephesians 3:4, what is it possible for people to do when it comes to reading God’s Word?
14. What does Ephesians 5:17 admonish Christians to do?
15. What two questions are asked in Romans 4:3 and Jeremiah 37:17 that every person should ask even today?
16. What does Matthew 23:9 forbid Christians from doing?
17. According to Catholic doctrine, “priests” can forgive people’s sins. But according to 1 John 1:9, who alone is able to forgive sins?
18. What important command did Jesus reiterate in Matthew 4:10 that still applies today?