

Roman Catholic Church Overview

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Unless otherwise noted, all Biblical quotations are from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

Introduction:

My first experience with the Roman Catholic Church came a few months after I became a Christian. I was 20 years old, and a new believer in Jesus. Everything was exciting about being a Christian. The Bible was new, my faith was new, and Jesus was new! I tried to learn all I could about my new Savior who loved me so much.

I was invited to attend Roman Catholic Mass, so I thought it would be worthwhile to check it out. After all, the Roman Catholic Church is the largest church on the planet with one billion+ members!



Since I didn't know much about Roman Catholicism, I looked forward to my first Mass with great anticipation.

Mass appeared on the exterior to be quite different than what I was used to at the Evangelical church I had been attending. In contrast to the informal worship service I was accustomed to, the Mass was very structured, with the priest and congregation reciting their lines from memory. There was a lot of standing and sitting, and everyone but me seemed to know the liturgy.

Despite those differences, I concluded that Mass was a lot more similar to my new faith than different.

They used the Bible, had communion, and, most importantly, talked about Jesus; all of which we did at my church as well!

I believe that many Christians come to a similar conclusion about the Roman Catholic Church: perhaps Rome is a bit more liturgical or formal than we're used to, but they're basically another Christian denomination.

The purpose of this document is to show that the Roman Catholic Church is not another Christian denomination.

Please understand that this document is not a "bashing" of Roman Catholics. My purpose is to bring to light truths about Roman Catholicism that are vital to understand, yet known by very few.

The Roman Catholic Church claims to be the true "Mother Church" and invites the "separated brethren" (non-Catholics) to return home. This document seeks to serve as a

maternity test, subjecting Rome's maternal claim to the DNA testing of the Word of God. If it's true that Rome is the true "Mother Church," then all non-Catholics must run to her, forsaking our prodigal ways. If, however, the Word of God proves this claim to be false, then we owe Rome no allegiance, and must lovingly warn others from being lured into her embrace.

If you're a Roman Catholic and you're reading this document, then I implore you to use the Bible to test what your church has infallibly decreed, because the Bible is what God has infallibly decreed.

This document simply presents historical statements and positions of the Roman Catholic Church, many of which the church, particularly in America, is reluctant to reveal. When one understands the official beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church and compares them with the beliefs of the historic Christian church, one must conclude there is a mortal difference.

The stakes are very high. If the Roman Catholic Church is, as it claims, the true church of God founded on Saint Peter, then every Christian must run to Rome for salvation! If, however, Rome is found to be an imposter, then we must run from Rome with all vigor and haste.

There is no arguing against the fact that the Roman Catholic Church, with its history, art, and colossal number of followers, is one of the most impressive faiths in the history of mankind. But the measuring stick for truth is not found in these things. As Christians, we know that the measure of truth is found in the Bible, the Word of God.

My prayer is that this document will be a blessing and encouragement to you, and that we will all glorify our God and King by not only studying and knowing the truth, but by following it and doing it as well.

God bless you!

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P.S. The document you are reading is a condensed version of an essay called, *The Gospel of Rome: Investigating the Claims of the Roman Catholic Church*. Please consult that essay for a much fuller analysis of this important issue. You can download this essay for free at: http://www.sohmer.net/media/Gospel_of_Rome.pdf

Doctrinal Overview:

Salvation by Merit/Works:

RC Doctrine:

“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” (Council of Trent, 1545-1563, Session 6, Canons Concerning Justification, Canon 24).

“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” (Trent, Session 6, Canon 12).

“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” (Trent, Session 6, Canon 32).

What the Bible Teaches:

“Knowing that a man is **not justified by the works of the law**, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and **not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified**” (Galatians 2:16, emphasis mine).

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that **not of yourselves**: it is the gift of God: **Not of works**, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9, emphasis mine).

“**Not by works of righteousness which we have done**, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:5-7, emphasis mine).

“Therefore **by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified** in his sight” (Romans 3:20).

“Being **justified freely by his grace** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24, emphasis mine).

“Therefore we conclude that **a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law**” (Romans 3:28, emphasis mine).

Saved by Baptism/Baptismal Regeneration:

RC Doctrine:

“Holy Baptism holds the first place among the sacraments, because it is the door of the spiritual life; for by it we are made members of Christ and incorporated with the Church... The effect of this sacrament is the remission of all sin, original and actual; likewise of all punishment which is due for sin. As a consequence, no satisfaction for past sins is enjoined upon those who are baptized; and if they die before they commit any sin, they attain immediately to the kingdom of heaven and the vision of God” (Pope Eugene IV, Bull “Exultate Deo,” 1439 AD).

“If anyone says that baptism is optional, that is, not necessary for salvation, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA” (Trent, Session 7, Canon 5).

What the Bible Teaches:

“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel” (1 Corinthians 1:17).

It is clear that Paul makes a distinction between the gospel and baptism; a distinction the Roman Catholic Church will not make. The Bible teaches that water baptism is associated with the gospel, but it is not part of the gospel.

“While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also **was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost**. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, **Can any man forbid water**, that these should not be baptized, **which have received the Holy Ghost** as well as we?” (Acts 10:44-47, emphasis mine).

It is clear that Cornelius and the other Gentiles had received (past tense) the Holy Ghost, the promise of what is to come (Ephesians 1:13-14), but were not yet baptized in water.

Penance:

RC Doctrine:
What the Bible Teaches:

“If anyone says that in the Catholic Church penance is not truly and properly a sacrament instituted by Christ the Lord for reconciling the faithful of God as often as they fall into sin after baptism, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA” (Trent, Session 7, Canon 5).

The Bible is completely silent on “penance.”

However, the Bible does talk about “repentance.”

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30).

“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:1-2).

You Can Lose Your Salvation:

RC Doctrine:

“Those who through sin have forfeited the received grace of justification, can again be justified when, moved by God, they exert themselves to obtain through the sacrament of penance the recovery, by the merits of Christ, of the grace lost” (Trent, Session 6).

What the Bible Teaches:

Jesus promised eternal life based on what he had done. The Word of God promises: “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (1 John 5:13).

It’s that simple. We who know Jesus can know that we have (present tense) eternal life. Jesus said: “And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:39-40).

The Bible is clear that we can know that eternal life is our present possession. Yet Rome teaches that you can lose your salvation.

Auricular Confession:

RC Doctrine:

“Everyone who has attained the age of reason is bound to confess his sins at least once a year to his own parish pastor” (Fourth Lateran Council, 1215 AD, Canon 21).

“If anyone denies that sacramental confession was instituted by divine law or is necessary to salvation; or says that the manner of confessing secretly to a priest alone, which the Catholic Church has always observed from the beginning and still observes, is at variance with the institution and command of Christ and is a human contrivance, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA” (Trent, Session 14, Canon 7).

What the Bible Teaches:

“We search in vain in the Bible for any word supporting the doctrine of “auricular confession” (the official title for confession to an authorized priest in a confession box. It is called “auricular” because it is spoken secretly, into the ear of the priest.) It is equally impossible to find any authorization or general practice of it during the first 1,000 years of the Christian era. Not a word is found in the writings of the early church fathers about confessing sins to a priest or to anyone except God alone. Auricular confession is not mentioned once in the writings of Augustine, Origen, Nestorius, Tertullian, Jerome, Chrysostem, or Athanasius; all of these and many others apparently lived and died without ever thinking of going to confession. No one other than God was thought to be worthy to hear confessions or to grant forgiveness” (Keith Green, *The Catholic Chronicles*, <http://www.sohmer.net/media/KG-TCC.pdf>).

Purgatory:

RC Doctrine:

“The doctrine of purgatory clearly demonstrates that even when the guilt of sin has been taken away, punishment for it or the consequences of it may remain to be expiated or cleansed. They often are. In fact, in purgatory the souls of those ‘who died in the charity of God and truly repentant, but who had not made satisfaction with adequate penance for their sins and omissions’ are cleansed after death with punishment designed to purge away their debt” (Vatican II).

“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” (Trent, Session 6, Canon 30).

What the Bible Teaches:

Purgatory is never mentioned in the Bible.

The Bible does say, however:

“but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11).

“the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

“Wherefore [Jesus] is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

Indulgences:

RC Doctrine:

“[The Roman Catholic Church] teaches and commands that the usage of indulgences -- a usage most beneficial to Christians and approved by the authority of the Sacred Councils -- should be kept in the Church; and it condemns with anathema [cursing by ecclesiastical authority] those who say that indulgences are useless or that the Church does not have the power to grant them” (Vatican II).

“This treasury also includes the truly immense, unfathomable and ever pristine value before God of the prayers and good works of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, who following in the footsteps of Christ the Lord and by His grace have sanctified their lives and fulfilled the mission entrusted to them by the Father. Thus while attaining their own salvation, they have also cooperated in the salvation of their brothers in the unity of the Mystical Body” (Pope Paul VI, *Indulgentiarum Doctrina*, 1967).

What the Bible Teaches:

Indulgences are never mentioned in the Bible.

The Bible does say, however:

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

“the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18).

The Pope:

“We teach and define that it is a dogma Divinely revealed that the Roman pontiff when he speaks ex cathedra... is possessed of that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed that his Church should be endowed in defining doctrine regarding faith or morals, and that therefore such definitions of the Roman pontiff are of themselves and not from the consent of the Church irreformable” (Vatican I).

“There is neither appeal nor recourse against a decision or decree of the Roman Pontiff” (1983 Code of Canon Law, Canon 333).

“Furthermore, we declare, we proclaim, we define that it is absolutely necessary for salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff” (Pope Bonafice VIII, *Unam Sanctam*, November 18, 1302).

“The Roman Pontiff judges all men, but is judged by no one” (*Unam Sanctam*).

“That which was spoken of Christ... ‘Thou hast subdued all things under His feet,’ may well seem verified in me. I have the authority of the King of kings. I am all in all and above all, so that God, Himself and I, the Vicar of God, have but one consistory, and I am able to do almost all that God can do. What therefore, can you make of me but God?” (*Unam Sanctam*).

RC Doctrine:

The classic text that the RCC uses to support the Papacy is Matthew 16:18. It can be demonstrated that the “rock” of Matthew 16:18 is not Peter.

Every single use of the word “rock” in the Bible figuratively is a direct reference to God: (Deuteronomy 32:4; 32:15; 32:18; 32:30; 32:37; 1 Samuel 2:2; 2 Samuel 22:2; 22:3; Psalm 18:2; 18:31; 18:46; 28:1; 31:2; 31:3; 42:9; 62:2; 62:6; 62:7; 71:3; 78:35; 89:26; 92:15; 94:22; 95:1; Isaiah 8:14; 17:10) and then in the New Testament: (Romans 9:33; 1 Corinthians 10:4; 1 Peter 2:8 and 1 Corinthians 3:11).

It was a very common Jewish expression (and still is) to call God “my rock and my redeemer,” “the rock of my salvation” etc.

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter (Greek: *petros*), and upon this rock (Greek: *petra*) I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18).

Given the overwhelming precedence of “Rock” referring to God, Jesus is contrasting Himself and Peter. Peter is a stone, just as every Christian is a lively stone (1 Peter 2:5), but, in contrast, Jesus is the “chief corner stone, elect, precious” (1 Peter 2:6).

When we consult the complete counsel of Scripture, the overwhelming Old Testament and New Testament references to “Rock” meaning God make the point clear that the church of Jesus Christ is not built on Peter, but built on the Lord Jesus Christ.

What the Bible Teaches:

Transubstantiation:

RC Doctrine:

“If anyone denies that in the sacrament of the most Holy Eucharist are contained truly, really and substantially the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently the whole Christ, but says that He is in it only as in a sign, or figure or force, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA” (Trent, Session 13, Canon 1).

What the Bible Teaches:

The Roman Catholic Church uses Matthew 26:26-28 and John 6:48-57 to support transubstantiation.

“Jesus did not say *touto gignetai* (“this has become” or “is turned into”), but *touto esti* (“this signifies, represents” or “stands for”) (the New Testament was written in Greek.) It is obvious that Jesus’ meaning was not literal but symbolic!” (Green).

“Understood literally, what Jesus said would be highly objectionable since it would involve cannibalism and a use of blood that was strictly forbidden in the Law (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 7:26, 27; 17:10–14; Deut. 12:23, 24)” (*New Geneva Study Bible*).

“It is not necessary to take these phrases physically. Jesus’ words need not be taken in the sense of ingesting his actual physical body and blood. Jesus often spoke in metaphors and figures of speech. He called the Pharisees “blind guides” (Matt. 23:16) and Herod a “fox” (Luke 13:32). Roman Catholic scholars do not take these terms literally. Neither do they understand Jesus to be speaking physically when he said, “I am the gate” (John 10:9). There is, therefore, no necessity to take Jesus in a literal, physical way when he said, “this is my body,” or, “eat my flesh.” Jesus often spoke in graphic parables and figures, as he himself said (Matt. 13:10–11)” (Geisler, N. L., & Rhodes, R., *When Cultists Ask: A Popular Handbook on Cultic Misinterpretations*).

If the wafer and wine physically change into Jesus’ actual flesh and blood, then:

- 2 hours after Mass, does every faithful Catholic excrete our Lord in their bathroom?
- What if one vomits?
- What happens to the hosts that aren’t eaten?
Is the Lord stored in a pantry until the next day?
- What if mice break in and eat it?

The Mass is an Actual Sacrifice:

RC Doctrine:

“For it is the liturgy through which, especially in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, ‘the work of our redemption is accomplished’ (Vatican II).

“Hence the Mass, the Lord’s Supper, is at the same time and inseparably: a sacrifice in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated” (Vatican II).

“The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice: ‘The victim is one and the same: the same [Christ] now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered Himself on the Cross; only the manner of offering is different.’ ‘And since in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered Himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the Cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner... this sacrifice is truly propitiatory’” (*The Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church*, 1367).

What the Bible Teaches:

“[Jesus] **needeth not daily**, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for **this he did once**, when he offered up himself” (Hebrews 7:27, emphasis mine).

“**Nor yet that [Jesus] should offer himself often**, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now **once** in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So **Christ was once offered** to bear the sins of many” (Hebrews 9:25-28, emphasis mine).

“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all**. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had **offered one sacrifice for sins for ever**, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by **one offering** he hath perfected **for ever** them that are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:10-14, emphasis mine).

Worshipping the Eucharist:

RC Doctrine:

“All the faithful ought to show to this most holy sacrament the worship which is due to the true God, as has always been the custom of the Catholic Church. Nor is it to be adored by any the less because it was instituted by Christ to be eaten” (Vatican II).

“Indeed, since the Eucharistic Mystery was instituted out of love, and makes Christ sacramentally present, it is worthy of thanksgiving and worship. And this worship must be prominent in all our encounters with the Blessed Sacrament...

Adoration of Christ in this sacrament of love must also find expression in various forms of eucharistic devotion: personal prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, Hours of Adoration, periods of exposition—short, prolonged and annual (Forty Hours)—eucharistic benediction, eucharistic processions, eucharistic congresses” (Pope John Paul II, *Dominicae Cenae* (On The Mystery And Worship Of The Eucharist), February 24,1980).

What the Bible Teaches:

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments” (Exodus 20:4-6).

Interestingly, this commandment “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image” is taken out of the official Roman Catholic list of “The Ten Commandments.” Instead, the tenth commandment, “Thou shalt not covet” is split into two: “Thou shalt not covet your neighbor’s wife” and “thou shalt not covet your neighbor’s goods” so that the list will still add up to ten.

Mary Was Product of an “Immaculate Conception”:

RC Doctrine:

“Through the centuries the Church has become ever more aware that Mary, “full of grace” through God, was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854:

The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin” (Catechism, 491).

“Immaculate in every respect; innocent, and verily most innocent; spotless, and entirely spotless; holy and removed from every stain of sin; all pure, all stainless, the very model of purity and innocence; more beautiful than beauty, more lovely than loveliness; more holy than holiness, singularly holy and most pure in soul and body; the one who surpassed all integrity and virginity; the only one who has become the dwelling place of all the graces of the most Holy Spirit. God alone excepted, Mary is more excellent than all, and by nature fair and beautiful, and more holy than the Cherubim and Seraphim. To praise her all the tongues of heaven and earth do not suffice” (Pope Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus - The Immaculate Conception*, December 8, 1854).

What the Bible Teaches:

Luke chapter 1 records Mary’s response to the news that she would bare the Son of God. “And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God **my Saviour**” (Luke 1:46-47, emphasis mine).

Former Nun, Mary Ann Collins, appropriately asked:

“If Mary were sinless, then why would she need a savior?” (Mary Ann Collins, *Mary Worship? A Study of Catholic Practice and Doctrine*, http://www.bereanbeacon.org/articles/mary_worship.htm)

She also pointed out:

“The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was first introduced by a heretic (a man whose teachings were officially declared to be contrary to Church doctrine). For centuries this doctrine was unanimously rejected by popes, Fathers and theologians of the Catholic Church. (William Webster, *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, pp. 72-77)” (Collins).

Mary Was Sinless:

RC Doctrine:

“Mary benefited first of all and uniquely from Christ’s victory over sin: she was preserved from all stain of original sin and by a special grace of God committed no sin of any kind during her whole earthly life” (*Catechism*, 411).

“The Fathers of the Eastern tradition call the Mother of God “the All-Holy” (*Panagia*), and celebrate her as ‘free from any stain of sin, as though fashioned by the Holy Spirit and formed as a new creature’. By the grace of God Mary remained free of every personal sin her whole life long” (*Catechism*, 493).

What the Bible Teaches:

“For **all have sinned**, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23, emphasis mine).

Please note that “all have sinned.” This includes Mary.

“Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? **for thou only art holy**: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest” (Revelation 15:4, emphasis mine).

The Bible teaches that God alone is holy. Mary is excluded.

“As it is written, **There is none righteous, no, not one**” (Romans 3:10, emphasis mine).

Mary Remained a Virgin:

RC Doctrine:

“the liturgy of the Church celebrates Mary as *Aeiparthenos*, the ‘Ever-virgin’” (*Catechism*, 499).

What the Bible Teaches:

“Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not **till** she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS” (Matthew 1:24-25, emphasis mine).

“‘Till’ (until) means that after that point, Joseph did ‘know’ (have sexual relations with) Mary. (See Genesis 4:1 where Adam ‘knew’ Eve and she conceived and had a son.)” (Collins).

“And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not **his mother called Mary?** and **his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?** And **his sisters**, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?” (Matthew 13:54-56, emphasis mine).

Mary the Mother of God:

RC Doctrine:

“The Virgin Mary... is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and of the redeemer” (*Catechism*, 963).

“Holy Mary, Mother of God: With Elizabeth we marvel, ‘And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?’ Because she gives us Jesus, her son, Mary is Mother of God” (*Catechism*, 2677).

What the Bible Teaches:

“The Incarnation means that Jesus was both fully God and fully man. Mary was only the mother of Jesus as man, and not the mother of Jesus as God. According to the Bible, the world was created through Jesus. This was long before Mary was born” (Collins).

Mary’s Body Taken to Heaven/Assumption:

RC Doctrine:

“Finally the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son’s Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians” (*Catechism*, 966).

What the Bible Teaches:

“There is no biblical reference to the assumption of Mary. The Gospel of John was written around 90 A.D., which is more than 100 years after Mary was born. (Surely Mary was more than ten years old when Jesus was conceived.) If Mary had been supernaturally assumed into Heaven, wouldn’t John (the disciple that Mary lived with) have mentioned it? When Enoch and Elijah were taken up to Heaven, the Bible recorded it. With Elijah it was recorded in some detail. (See Genesis 6:24 and 2 Kings 2:1-18.)

The Assumption of Mary was officially declared to be a dogma of the Roman Catholic faith in 1950...

In 495 A.D., Pope Gelasius issued a decree which rejected this teaching as heresy and its proponents as heretics. In the sixth century, Pope Hormisdas also condemned as heretics those authors who taught the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary.

The early Church clearly considered the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary to be a heresy worthy of condemnation. Here we have ‘infallible’ popes declaring something to be a heresy. Then in 1950, Pope Pius XII, another ‘infallible’ pope, declared it to be official Roman Catholic doctrine. (William Webster, *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, pp. 81-85)” (Collins).

Mary Is a Co-Mediator:

RC Doctrine:

“Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation... Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix.” (*Catechism*, 969).

“With equal truth may it be also affirmed that, by the will of God, Mary is the intermediary through whom is distributed unto us this immense treasure of mercies gathered by God, for mercy and truth were created by Jesus Christ. Thus as no man goeth to the Father but by the Son, so no man goeth to Christ but by His Mother” (Pope Leo XIII, *Octobri Mense* Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, On the Rosary, September 22, 1891).

What the Bible Teaches:

We are invited to draw near to God directly without the need of a human mediator!

“In whom [Jesus] we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him” (Ephesians 3:12).

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus : Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

“Wherefore [Jesus] is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

Mary Is the Co-Redeemer:

RC Doctrine:

“With her suffering and dying Son she suffered and almost died, so did she surrender her mother’s rights over her Son for the salvation of human beings, and to appease the justice of God, so far as pertained to her, she immolated her Son, so that it can be rightly said, that she together with Christ has redeemed the human race” (Pope Benedict XV, *Epistle, Admodum Probatur*, June 20, 1917).

“By the fullness of grace which confers on her the most illustrious of her many titles, the Blessed Virgin is infinitely superior to all the hierarchies of men and angels, the one creature who is closest of all to Christ. ‘It is a great thing in any saint to have grace sufficient for the salvation of many souls; but to have enough to suffice for the salvation of everybody in the world. is the greatest of all; and this is found in Christ and in the Blessed Virgin’” (Pope Leo XIII, *Magnae Dei Matris - On the Rosary*, September 8, 1892).

What the Bible Teaches:

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had **by himself purged our sins**, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:1-3, emphasis mine).

Prayers to Dead Saints:

RC Doctrine:

“If anyone says that it is a deception to celebrate Masses in honor of the saints and **in order to obtain their intercession with God**, as the Church intends, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA” (Trent, Session 22, Canon 5).

“The intercession of the saints. ‘Being more closely united to Christ, those who dwell in heaven fix the whole Church more firmly in holiness.... They do not cease to intercede with the Father for us, as they proffer the merits which they acquired on earth through the one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus.... So by their fraternal concern is our weakness greatly helped’” (*Catechism*, 956).

What the Bible Teaches:

God has forbidden communication with the dead at Leviticus 19:31, Leviticus 20:6, Deuteronomy 18:9, and 1 Chronicles 10:13.

“How, then, can a human being such as Mary hear the prayers of millions of Roman Catholics, in many different countries, praying in many different languages, all at the same time?

Let any priest or layman try to converse with only three people at the same time and see how impossible that is for a human being... The objections against prayers to Mary apply equally against prayers to the saints. For they too are only creatures, infinitely less than God, able to be at only one place at a time and to do only one thing at a time.

How, then, can they listen to and answer thousands upon thousands of petitions made simultaneously in many different lands and in many different languages? Many such petitions are expressed, not orally, but only mentally, silently. How can Mary and the saints, without being like God, be present everywhere and know the secrets of all hearts?” (Lorraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, pp. 142-143).

The Bible:

“But the task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone...

It is clear, therefore, that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls” (Vatican II).

On the one hand, Rome says the Word of God is infallible and our only authority, but when we look at what Rome *means* by that, we discover:

- The Word of God exists in two forms: written and oral
- The oral component is taught by the Roman Catholic Magisterium
- Only through the Roman Catholic Magisterium can anyone rightly interpret the Word of God.

“Here is the ‘three-part’ view of authority found so often in Roman Catholic writings: the Scriptures, tradition, and the Magisterium (the Church’s teaching power). Since the Magisterium defines the extent of the Scriptures (by defining the canon), claims sole right of interpretation of the Scriptures, tells us what is and what is not tradition, and defines doctrines on the basis of self-defined tradition, in reality we see that the only one of the three ‘legs’ of this system that is not defined by one of the other is the Magisterium itself” (James R. White, *The Roman Catholic Controversy*, p. 74).

In practice, the Roman Catholic Church has elevated its Magisterium above the Word of God.

RC Doctrine:

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

“The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever” (Psalm 12:6-7).

“I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name” (Psalm 138:2).

God has placed His Word above even His own name, and the Roman Catholic Church has placed its Magisterium above God’s Word.

What the Bible Teaches:

The Only True Church:

RC Doctrine:

“For it is through Christ’s Catholic Church alone, which is the universal help towards salvation. that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained. It was to the apostolic college alone, of which Peter is the head, that we believe that Our Lord entrusted all the blessings of the New Covenant, in order to establish on earth the one Body of Christ into which all those should be fully incorporated who belong in any way to the people of God” (Vatican II).

“With our hearts we believe and with our lips we confess but one Church, not that of the heretics, but the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church, outside which we believe that no one is saved” (Pope Innocent III, December 18, 1208).

“He scatters and gathers not who gathers not with the Church and with Jesus Christ, and all who fight not jointly with Him and with the Church are in very truth contending against God” (Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical, *Sapientiae Christianae*, January 10, 1890).

What the Bible Teaches:

We have seen that the Roman Catholic Church is not God’s true church. It fails the test of comparing its teachings with that of the Bible.

Evolution of Catholic Doctrine:

The Catholic Church maintains that it is the same Church it has always been, dating back to the Apostles. But this is plainly not the case.

- 200's: Presbyter (or elders) were first called priests by Lucian
- 200: Immersion of infants who are dying, but considered sinless. (Tertullian V.12)
- 300: Prayers for the dead
- 325: Council of Nice: prohibition of clerical marriage was rejected
- 375: The veneration of angels and dead saints and the use of images
- 379: Praying to Mary and Saints
- 394: Mass as a daily celebration
- 416: Council of Mela: infant baptism by immersion commanded for all infants
- 431: Council of Ephesus: first use of term "Mother of God"
- 526: Extreme Unction, a.k.a. "last rites"
- 593: The Doctrine of Purgatory popularized from *Apocrypha* by Gregory the Great
- 600: Prayers began to be offered to Mary, dead saints, and angels
- 607: First Pope: Boniface III is the first person to take the title of "universal Bishop"
- 709: Kissing of Pope Constantine's feet
- 787: 2nd Council of Nicea: veneration of the cross, images, and relics authorized
- 850: Holy water
- 995: Canonization of dead saints, first by Pope John XV
- 1022: Penance
- 1079: Celibacy enforced for priests, bishops, presbyters (Pope Gregory VII)
- 1090: The rosary, (copied from Hindus and Muslims) was introduced by Peter the Hermit
- 1100's: The Mass developed gradually as a sacrifice, attendance was made obligatory
- 1190: Sale of Indulgences
- 1200's: Seven sacraments defined by Peter Lombard
- 1215: Fourth Lateran Council: Transubstantiation, Auricular Confession, Mass a Sacrifice of Christ, The "Inquisition" legalized and promoted
- 1217: Adoration and Elevation of Host: ie. communion bread (Pope Honorius III)
- 1268: Priestly power of absolution
- 1311: Council of Ravenna: Baptism by sprinkling is universal standard
- 1414: Council of Constance: Laity no longer offered cup at communion
- 1439: Council of Florence: purgatory proclaimed a dogma
- 1546: Council of Trent: *Apocrypha* added to the canon, tradition is declared of equal authority with the Bible
- 1854: The Immaculate Conception of Mary (Pope Pius IX)
- 1864: Condemnation of all scientific discoveries not approved by the Roman Catholic Church (Pope Pius IX)
- 1870: Vatican I: Infallibility of Pope
- 1950: Assumption of Mary (Pope Pius XII)
- 1996: Catholics can believe in Evolution (Pope John Paul II)

(List taken from Steve Rudd, *Roman Catholic Doctrinal Evolution*, <http://www.bible.ca/cath-new-doctrines.htm>, and Loraine Boettner, preface to the fifth edition of his book, *Roman Catholicism*)

“Saved” Roman Catholics:

It is common for members of the Roman Catholic Church to claim that they are born-again saved Christians. The following are questions to ask a member of the Roman Catholic Church who claims to be truly saved:

1. When were you converted?
2. How were you converted?
3. To what, or to whom, were you converted?
4. What do you believe now that you did not believe before your conversion?
5. What does it mean to be saved?
6. On what Scriptural promises do you base your salvation?
7. What does it mean to be born again?
8. Are you sure today that if you die tomorrow, or at any time in the future, you will be in heaven immediately after death?
9. What do you believe about Purgatory?
10. What do you believe about the Mass?
11. Do you still participate in the Mass?
12. Do you believe that to miss Mass voluntarily on Sunday would be a mortal sin, so that if you did not confess it before you died, you would not go to heaven?
13. Do you believe that any sinner can be saved who dies without trusting in Jesus Christ alone for the salvation of his soul and forgiveness of his sins?
14. Do you believe that Mary and Roman Catholic saints can help you get to heaven?
15. How do you believe that the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ is applied to your soul?
16. Have you told your priest you have been saved (converted)?
17. Do you believe you will still go to heaven if you leave the Roman Catholic Church, receive believer’s baptism and join a fundamental Protestant church?
18. When and where do you plan to do this?

“As these questions, and others you can think of, are discussed in detail, you will quickly see that the person is trusting in his work, merits, baptism, confirmation, sacraments, or something besides - or plus - Jesus Christ and not in Christ and Christ alone. He can then be shown the difference between his unbiblical form of salvation and the saving faith of the Bible” (*18 Questions For “Saved” Roman Catholics*, <http://www.biblebelievers.net/Romanism/kjc18qst.htm>).

Contending with Roman Catholicism; Not Attacking Roman Catholics:

Please remember that the purpose of this document is not to attack individual Roman Catholics. We are interested in Biblically understanding the stated doctrines of the church and testing them against the Bible.

The Apostle John told us, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

The same Apostle said, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 4). That is exactly what we are after: the truth. It is a joyful thing to learn, know, and follow the truth.

How we are to treat Roman Catholics:

Sadly, Roman Catholics can be on the receiving end of harsh treatment, even by those who claim to be Christians. This should never be.

The Bible tells us how to treat all people, (including Roman Catholics.) We are to love them, serve them, be kind to them, be respectful to them, and lovingly guide them into the truth (which means warning them).

Conclusion:

Thank you for taking the time to read this document. I appreciate your willingness to consider what the Bible has to say about the claims of the Roman Catholic Church.

Despite what people are inclined to believe, the Roman Catholic Church is not “another denomination” or a more liturgical form of Christianity.

It is a dangerous cult that leads 1 billion+ people to hell.

Believing/Saying this does not make one mean or divisive; it prods us to lovingly reach out to this mission field.

The bedrock of Biblical faith is the 10 Commandments. “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” Have we always put God first in our lives? Of course not.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” Have we ever used God’s name as a swear-word? Even if we haven’t, all of us have failed to give God’s Holy name the reverence it is due.

“Thou shalt not steal.” Had we ever taken anything that didn’t belong to us? A pen? A paperclip? *Creative* tax preparation? The value of the object doesn’t matter. Who of us can honestly say we’ve followed this command always?

“Thou shalt not kill.” Jesus said that when we think evil thoughts towards someone without cause, we are guilty of murder.

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.” Jesus said that when we think lustful thoughts we are guilty of adultery. Who of us can say we have never had lustful thoughts?

And there are others: “Do not covet,” “Honor your mother and father,” “Do not lie.”

The truth is that whether we like it or not, we are accountable to God just like a criminal is accountable to the criminal justice system. We have broken God’s law, the Ten Commandments, and we stand guilty before the judge. There is coming a day when God will judge us all. There will be no appeals, no technicalities, and no evidence thrown out. We are all guilty; none of us even comes close to the standard that God demands. If we trust in our own works and merits to save us, we will be condemned to hell forever.

The Roman Catholic Church presents a gospel that is radically different than the one offered by the God of the Bible. The Roman Catholic gospel is one that depends on works and merit. But this is bad news because the Bible teaches that nobody is good enough to merit salvation on his or her own works. It is only by the grace of our Lord Jesus that anyone can be saved.

The Bible Teaches, “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10).

Can we merit our salvation as the Roman Catholic Church teaches? The Bible says, “But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6).

Be warned: The Apostle Paul said, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8). Those who do not cling to the true gospel of Christ will be found guilty on Judgment day. “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).

Acts 17:31 warns us that God “hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness.” On that day, those who trust in the Roman Catholic false gospel of works and merits will be found guilty of not being good enough. “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10). And God will be just in casting that person out forever. “*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” (Hebrews 10:31).

The most important question everyone must answer is: “If you were to die today, do you know that you have eternal life? Are you certain that you will spend all eternity with God the Father?”

Despite the impressive zeal and devotion of many, many Roman Catholics, following the wrong gospel is a serious matter.

The Biblical gospel is that we are all guilty of transgressing the Law of the One True God. All our works are like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). If we try to reach God on our merits, we will fail every time.

But in God's great love and mercy, He came down in the form of a man and died on the cross in our place, taking upon Himself our punishment, providing for our salvation! "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). This is the good news, no, great news!

I invite you to repent of and forsake the false gospel of works and merit, and turn to and worship the True and Living God, who offers salvation and full atonement because of Jesus' work and merit.

May God bless you as you consider this gravely important matter.

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P.S. The document you are reading is a condensed version of an essay called, *The Gospel of Rome: Investigating the Claims of the Roman Catholic Church*. Please consult that essay for a much fuller analysis of this important issue. You can download this essay for free at: http://www.sohmer.net/media/Gospel_of_Rome.pdf

Resources for Further Study:

The following resources are recommended and listed in no particular order:

- *The Catholic Chronicles* – Keith Green – <http://www.sohmer.net/media/KG-TCC.pdf>
- *The Roman Catholic Controversy* – James R. White, Bethany House Publishers, 1996
- *Conversations with Catholics*, James G. McCarthy, Harvest House Publishers, 1997
- *Roman Catholicism*, Lorraine Boettner, Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, order at www.amazon.com
- *The Facts on Roman Catholicism* – John Ankerberg & John Weldon – Harvest House Publishers, 1993
- *The Pope and the Papacy* (sermon) – John MacArthur – <http://www.gty.org>
- *Irreconcilable Differences: Catholics, Evangelicals, and the New Quest for Unity* (audio) – John MacArthur, R. C. Sproul, D. James Kennedy, John Ankerberg – <http://www.gty.org>
- Grace to You – <http://www.gty.org>
- Alpha and Omega Ministries - <http://www.aomin.org>
- Biblical Discernment Ministries – <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/>
- Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry - <http://www.carm.org>
- Berean Beacon – <http://www.bereanbeacon.org/>
- Contender Ministries – <http://www.contenderministries.org>
- <http://www.christiananswers.net>
- <http://www.biblebelievers.net>
- Just For Catholics - <http://www.justforcatholics.org>
- Notes and Files from a “Cults” class I taught in 2005 – <http://cults.sohmer.net>
- *The Gospel of Rome: Investigating the Claims of the Roman Catholic Church* - The document you are reading is a condensed version of this essay. Please consult this essay for a much fuller analysis of this important issue. You can download this essay for free at: http://www.sohmer.net/media/Gospel_of_Rome.pdf