

Bible Christian Church/Catholic Church: What's the difference? (Short Answers to Frequently Asked Questions)

By Pastor James Moriello

(As taught on 4/25/2023 on the radio)

Introductory Remarks—The purpose of this teaching is to delineate the differences between the Bible Christian faith and the Roman Catholic faith. By Bible Christian, I mean fundamentalist conservative Bible doctrine and understanding. By Roman Catholic, I mean the denominational entity headed by the Pope from the Vatican. The purpose of this teaching is not to disparage any individual. An attempt has been made to present the facts as accurately as possible. There are four types of people listening to this radio show or reading this paper that I would like to address. Bible Christian, may you be instructed in this time, and I also hope that you gain an understanding of the differences between your beliefs and the Roman Catholic beliefs, so you can more effectively witness to your Roman Catholic friends. Roman Catholic friend, I hope you will understand the difference between your beliefs and ours, and research these things in your Bible. You are correct that we wish to convert you, but you also wish to convert me also into your way of thinking—that I might leave things alone, and not follow the Bible command to preach and teach the faith (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:20). Professing non-practicing or liberal Christian, consider what you believe in light of the Bible. Skeptic unbeliever, take a stand and believe the gospel tonight. You have lived long enough in apathy, and your soul will be required of you. Your soul is hanging over the fires of hell by a string, and it will fall in forthwith should your life end tonight.

- 1. Are Bible Christians and Roman Catholics the same?** Not all Christians are Roman Catholics. However, Roman Catholics who believe in Jesus Christ in faith are Christians. It is that faith that qualifies someone as a Christian regardless of what church they are in. There are true believers and false professors in every church. We believe in the same God, the Trinity, heaven and hell, and the same moral principles as affirmed in both the Old and New Testaments. The gospel is simple. **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”** (John 3:16). **“For I delivered unto you first of**

all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

- 2. How are Bible Christian beliefs and Roman Catholic beliefs different?** The approach we take in a Christian Church is that the Bible is the supreme authority in all matters of faith and practice. The Roman Catholic approach is that church tradition carries the same weight as Scripture. We believe that salvation (entrance into heaven) is a gift of God entirely by His grace and good works follow out of a responsive heart. We reject Roman Catholic teachings that might imply that saving grace can be imparted any other way or by any work of man, however good it may be. **“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).

- 3. What is the difference between a Catholic Bible and the Bible that other Christian Churches read (for example the King James Bible)?** The Roman Catholic Bible includes several books known as the Apocrypha in the middle of their Bible. These books were disputed throughout church history, but were affirmed to be canonical by the Council of Trent in the 16th century. We reject the authority of these books because they were not endorsed as Scripture by the Jews, Jesus, the Apostles, or the early church. **“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book”** (Revelation 22:18).

- 4. Why don't all Christians believe/follow the Pope hierarchy?** Non-Catholics believe that Jesus Christ is the Head of the church. The Bible says nothing about papal authority, so we reject the concept. Bible Christians understand that in Matthew 16, the Rock upon which the church is built is not Peter but rather Peter’s statement that Jesus is the Son of God. This not only is the correct view of that passage, but it is consistent with Matthew 21:42,

Ephesians 2:19-21, and 1 Corinthians 3:11, which all affirm that Jesus Christ is the foundation of the church. What Scripture does give us is two offices in the church only; namely elders and deacons. In the New Testament, Pastor is used interchangeably with Elder, Overseer, and Bishop. “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons” (Philippians 1:1). “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed” (1 Peter 5:1).

5. **Do you believe in the sacrament of confession?** No. The Bible explicitly says that Jesus Christ is the only Mediator between God and men. We are also told to confess our sins to God several times in the New Testament. “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).
6. **Do you believe there are there priests in a Christian church?** Yes, but in an entirely different sense. The Bible teaches us that we are all priests in the sense that we no longer need a human mediator between us and God because Jesus Christ has already provided a perfect once and for all sacrifice for sins. “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5).
7. **Why isn't infant baptism recognized? Why are people re-baptized/born again?** We believe that Christian baptism is an outward act of obedience resulting from a conscious inward decision to become a Christian. Since an infant cannot make such a decision, we reject infant baptism. “And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him” (Acts 8:36-38).

8. Do you believe in saints? Why or why not? Yes, but not in the same sense as the Roman Catholic Church teaches. Saint comes from a word that means set apart one. According to the Bible, every believer is a saint. We don't make celebrities of mere men and women. Jesus Christ is the one Celebrity. "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's" (1 Corinthians 1:2).

9. How is your service different than a Catholic Mass? The sermon drawn from a Bible text is the central part of the service. We do not follow a liturgy. "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, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

10. Why isn't your service called a mass? The central part of the Catholic mass is what is known as the Eucharistic sacrifice in which Jesus is mystically sacrificed at each mass. This is known as transubstantiation. We reject this because Jesus' sacrifice is affirmed by Scripture as a once and for all sacrifice that does not need repeating. "they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:6). "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 10:12-14)

11. What is speaking in tongues? Do all Christian churches have people who speak in tongues? Tongues was a temporary gift given to the early church to validate the gospel message of Jesus Christ and as a sign to unbelieving Israel of impending temporal and spiritual judgment. A few Catholic churches and many other Christian churches believe the gift is for today. We, and many other churches,

believe that tongues is not for today. “Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away” (1 Corinthians 13:8). “Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not” (1 Corinthians 14:22).

12. Is Sunday School at a non-Catholic Christian church the same as CCD at a Catholic church? Yes and No. It is in the sense that it is religious education based on Jesus. It is not in the sense that it is more focused on Scripture and less on Sacraments. “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

13. Do you make your First Communion, First Penance and Confirmation at a Bible Christian church? Why/why not? The only sacraments that were commanded by Jesus are Baptism and Communion. “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the LORD our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:38-42).

14. Do you have communion every week? Yes, we do at Firm Foundation. Although the required frequency of Communion is never spelled out in Scripture, we believe the practice of the early church was weekly observance. Many non-Catholic churches observe the Lord's Table less frequently. “And upon the first day of the week,

when the disciples came together to break bread” (Acts 20:7). “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come” (1 Corinthians 11:26).

15. Who can partake of the elements of Communion in your church?

All believers in Jesus Christ who are not out of fellowship with Him as a result of habitual sin they intend to continue committing may partake of Communion. “Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body” (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).

16. The communion bread at your church is not the same as the hosts at the Catholic church, what is it?

We use unleavened bread as a reminder of the Last Supper and a symbol of the sinless Son of God, Jesus. “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

17. Do you serve wine or grape juice at communion time?

We serve grape juice only, so as not to present a problem for anyone who may have a problem with alcohol. We do this out of love and respect for any such brothers and sisters. “It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak” (Romans 14:21).