

A Study Of Catholicism

by Tim Haile

The word “Catholic” is from the Greek word *katholikos* which means *universal*. Catholics believe the Roman Catholic church to be the one *universal church*. There are roughly 1 billion Catholics on the earth today. The Catholic church has been in existence for centuries. This leads many people to assume that it must be the true church. Others are lured to the Catholic church because of its spectacular cathedrals, images, sculptures, pageantry and ostentatious religious garb worn by their “priests.” However, the Catholic church is not the church of the Bible. It has, as the apostle Paul described, “*a form of godliness, but denying its power*” (2 Timothy 3:5). It has the appearance of spirituality, but its real focus is upon upon physical and even carnal things. It is a false religion.

Along with being doctrinally and morally wrong on many subjects, its history involves all types of barbaric practices and political and moral corruption. The Catholic church persecuted and executed hundreds of thousands of people throughout the 600 years of the Inquisition. Dissenters and reformers like John Huss and William Tyndale were branded as heretics and cruelly burned at the stake.

As we shall see in this study, the Catholic church ignores and rejects the Bible pattern and radically departs from Bible truth in many areas of belief and practice. In this study we will examine some of the more obvious and egregious errors of the Catholic church.

1. The Catholic Doctrine Of The Papacy:

The Catholic church recognizes the “Pope” as the head of the universal church on the earth. The Pope is called “the vicar” (substitute) of Christ upon the earth. The New Testament teaches that Christ is the only “head” of the church and that He rules the church from heaven (Ephesians 1:20-23; 5:23). Christ has no substitute on the earth. Fallible humans are not qualified to substitute for infallible God.

The universal church has no organization except for Christ as its head. The only “church” organization known to the New Testament that involves human overseers is that of the *local church*. In addressing the Philippian church Paul wrote, “*To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons*” (Philippians 1:1) This was a fully established and scripturally organized local church, and it is the only type of church organization known to the New Testament.

Catholics refer to the Pope as “holy father.” Jesus explicitly commanded His disciples to NOT call any man “father” in the spiritual sense or as a religious title — “*And call no man your ‘father’ on the earth, for you have one Father who is in heaven*” (Matthew 23:9). Catholics directly violate Christ’s prohibition when they address the Pope as their “holy father.”

Catholics claim that the apostle Peter was the first Pope. They even developed a special doctrine known as “*the primacy of Peter*” to accommodate their view that Peter was the chief of the apostles. They cite the “keys-of-the-kingdom” language in Matthew 16:18, 19 in defense of this view. However, this is not what Jesus taught. Jesus said,

“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

Catholics make some big mistakes in their handling of this passage:

- They claim that the “rock” of this passage is Peter himself. While it is true that Peter’s name means *rock*, it is not the same type of rock as the “rock” upon which Jesus said He would build His church. The word “Peter” is from the Greek word *petros*, meaning a detached stone — one that might be easily thrown or moved. However, the word “rock” is from the Greek word *petra*. The difference is clearly seen in Matthew 7:24 where Jesus described the wise man as one who built his house up the “rock” (*petra*). The word “petra” means *a mass of rock* or a *cliff*. It is rock that cannot be easily moved or thrown.
- There is also the simple matter of linguistics and grammar. The word “Peter” is *masculine*. The word “rock” is *feminine*. The Greek word for “this” (*tauta*) is also *feminine*, thus it does not refer to (masculine) Peter! We must also consider the sentence construction. Jesus said, “*you are Peter, and on this rock...*” By distinguishing “you” (Peter) from “this” (rock), Jesus distinguishes Peter from the rock. Peter was one thing and the rock was something entirely different. The “rock” to which Jesus referred was His own *deity*. Peter acknowledged this great reality when he confessed the divinely revealed truth that Jesus was “*the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (Matthew 16:16-17). This divine foundation was prophesied by Isaiah (Isa. 28:16) and confirmed by Peter to be *Jesus Christ* (1 Peter 2:5-8). The “rock” upon which Jesus built His church was not *Peter*, nor merely Peter’s *confession*, but rather the great reality that stood as the basis of Peter’s confession — the deity of Jesus Christ. Christ built His church upon the foundation of His own divine nature.
- Catholics argue that Peter must have held a “prime” position among the apostles since he was given “the keys of the kingdom” and special binding and loosing powers. This argument completely ignores the fact that Jesus later made this same “binding” and “loosing” promise to *all of the apostles*. Matthew 18:18 says, “*Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*” Matthew 16:19 must be interpreted in connection with Matthew 18:18. What applied to Peter applied also to the other apostles. When the first gospel sermon was preached, Peter *stood up with the eleven* and they *all* preached the things that God had bound and loosed (Acts 2:14). The connection between Acts 16:19 and 18:18 cannot be lightly dismissed.

- Catholics argue that this binding and loosing power was native to Peter (and to subsequent “popes”) and that it enabled him to unilaterally issue decrees and edicts in the place of God. This claim is just as baseless as their claim that the church was built upon the pebble of the apostle Peter. The phrases “will be bound” and “will be loosed” must be interpreted in light of the context. The New American Standard Bible best represents the force of the tense when it translates these phrases “*shall have been bound in heaven*” and “*shall have been loosed in heaven.*” Other plain passages vindicate this translation and interpretation. The apostles were promised the guidance of the Holy Spirit to *teach them all things, bring all things to their remembrance, and show them things to come* (John 14:26; 16:13). Peter confirmed this when he attributed the apostles’ preaching to the operation of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:14-21). Their mission began on that very day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), which was some time *after* the Lord’s promise to the apostles. Hence Jesus, speaking prospectively of what would happen beginning on Pentecost, used the language that He did in Matthew 16:19 and 18:18. Jesus did not mean that Truth would originate with Peter (or other apostles). He meant that the apostles would speak what God had already determined to be the Truth. “*All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God...*” (not of *man*, and see 2 Peter 1:16, 20, 21).

Catholics teach the doctrine of papal infallibility and claim that Peter was the first pope. However, Peter was not infallible. Almost immediately following the “keys” narrative discussed above, Matthew 16:23 records Jesus’ rebuke of Peter for his failure to be “mindful” of the things of God. Matthew 17:4 describes Peter’s misconception about the superiority of Christ over Moses and Elijah. Matthew 26:69-75 records his three-fold betrayal of Jesus following His arrest. Galatians 2:11-14 records the time when Peter behaved hypocritically and was openly rebuked by the apostle Paul. Though an apostle, Peter was a fallible man.

As for the Catholic notion of “the primacy of Peter,” Jesus explicitly taught that no apostle would be greater than any other in the kingdom. He even rebuked the apostles for having such ambitious thoughts (Matthew 20:20-24; Luke 22:24-27). In the previous paragraph I pointed out that Paul once rebuked Peter at Antioch. The narrative in Galatians 2:11-14 certainly doesn’t suggest that Peter had primacy over Paul!

Catholics teach that popes cannot be married. It is said that their only marriage is *to the church*. This is a blasphemous claim, for the New Testament teaches that the church is married to Christ (Ephesians 5:22-32; 2 Cor. 11:2, 3). Their doctrine about the pope being married to the church makes the church an *adulteress!* The traditional Catholic view has the church being married to both the pope and Christ at this same time.

The New Testament teaches that Peter was married. Matthew 8:14 speaks of Peter’s “wife’s mother” and in 1 Corinthians 9:5 Paul spoke of his right to take along a believing wife “*as do the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas.*” Either

the Catholics are wrong about Peter being the first pope or they are wrong in their prohibition of marriage for popes. They cannot be right about both claims.

Peter was not a pope, for the very concept of the *papacy* is both unscriptural and an affront to God.

2. The Catholic Doctrine Of Church Leadership Hierarchy:

Catholicism has a religious hierarchy of Pope, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, elders and deacons. The Catholic concept of the *diocese* allows the “bishop” of one church to govern other churches that are in his “diocese.” This concept is utterly foreign to the New Testament. As noted, the universal church has no organization except for Christ as its head. Local churches have elders (also called bishops and pastors, see *Acts 20:17 + 28 and 1 Peter 5:1-3 for the interchangeability of these three terms*) and deacons. Deacons are special *servants* and have no supervisory role. There is no *hierarchy* of oversight in true New Testament churches.

The New Testament explicitly teaches that bishops exercise authority *ONLY* over “*the flock*” that is “*among*” them (*Acts 20:28* and *1 Peter 5:2*). This absolutely prohibits a church or its leaders to oversee another church or churches. In these verses Paul and Peter taught that each local church is *autonomous*, being *independent* of one another and *self-governing*.

Some Catholics cite the fact that New Testament churches were to have both “bishops” and “deacons” as proof of a *hierarchical* form of church government. I have heard others and even some Christians express this dangerous misconception.

By New Testament definition, “elders” are *overseers* and “deacons” are *servants*. **Deacons play no role in “leading” local churches.** Elders, who are also called “bishops” and “pastors” (see *Acts 20:17 + 28* and *1 Peter 5:1-2*) govern local churches, not deacons. The concept of leadership hierarchy in a church is not taught in the New Testament. The concept developed as a part of a larger apostasy that became the “Catholic” church with its popes, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, priests and deacons. As noted before, Paul warned the Ephesian elders about the beginnings of this apostasy in *Acts 20:30* when he said that some among that eldership would “rise up and speak perverse things.” One of the earliest church apostasies was the doctrine of single bishop oversight of a church or churches. The New Testament authorizes a plurality of bishops per church — never just one bishop (*Acts 14:23; 15:2; 20:17 + 28; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5*). The one-bishop policy of Catholicism violates plain New Testament teaching.

Catholics are also wrong to ban marriage for church leaders. The apostle Paul said that the doctrine “forbidding marriage” is a “doctrine of devils” (*1 Timothy 4:1 & 3*). Catholics therefore teach *doctrines of devils* on the subject of marriage! On this point we should not ignore the *repeated sexual abuses by Catholic priests of young boys throughout the centuries*. In fact, at the very time of this writing, another scandal involving egregious sexual abuse of boys by so-called Catholic “priests” is almost

daily in the headlines. This behavior has happened in large part as a consequence of erroneous Catholic views regarding marriage.

Furthermore, these centuries-old cases of sexual abuse and rape of boys by Catholic priests is more than just sexual immorality — it is **homosexuality**. Due to societal pressures to portray homosexuality in a positive light and not criticize it, reporting on this subject is skewed and even avoided. However, homosexuality is explicitly condemned in the New Testament (Romans 1:26, 27; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; 1 Timothy 1:10; Jude 7).

3. The Catholic Doctrine Of “Monarchical” Bishops:

Not only do they believe in “lone” bishops, Catholics also believe that bishops exercise authority over “elders.” I Timothy 3:1-ff and 5:17-22 are cited as proof that Timothy had the authority to appoint elders, determine their wages and exercise general authority over them. As we shall see later, they make the same argument about Titus.

Catholics reject the notion that the appointment of elders can be accomplished by and within a local church. Though the New Testament contains no exact formula for appointing elders (“bishops” — KJV, 1 Tim. 3:1-2), it does contain clear teaching that explains who is qualified to serve as bishops. These qualifications are given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Either a man possesses these qualifications or he does not. If he does, and if the local church recognizes these qualifications in that man, then he may be appointed as an elder.

Concerning 1 Timothy 5:17-22, Paul nowhere said that Timothy was responsible for determining the wages of elders or that Timothy possessed judicial authority over elders or that Timothy possessed some unique authority to appoint elders. The above verses do address the eldership, but only in the sense that Paul gave to Timothy the instructions and qualifications related to that office. Timothy was a mere messenger. He possessed no special authority. For example, it was not *Timothy* who determined who was qualified to serve as elders or whether or not it was right to pay certain of them. It was God’s instructions that did that. Timothy’s job was to teach to others what Paul taught him. This is quite clear from 2 Timothy 2:2 where Paul said, “*The things that you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will also be able to teach others.*” The word “also” classifies Timothy as a “teacher,” NOT a “monarchical bishop.”

Catholics make the same argument with respect to Titus. They cite Titus 1:5 to prove that Titus had authority to appoint elders over the whole region of Crete.

However, Titus possessed no innate authority to *unilaterally* appoint elders. Like Timothy, what he did possess was the list of qualifications revealed to him through the apostle Paul (Titus 1:6-9). Again, the very qualifications themselves are proof against the notions of monarchical authority and apostolic succession. Regardless of what Timothy, Titus, or even Paul might have thought about a particular elder candidate,

that candidate would have been qualified *only if* he met the God-given qualifications of an elder (bishop).

For example, Catholic “bishops” regularly appoint unmarried men as bishops. 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 explicitly teach that a man must be married to a “woman” in order to qualify as a bishop. The Bible also teaches that a man must have children in order to be qualified to serve as a bishop (1 Timothy 3:4, 5; Titus 1:6). Catholics violate the explicit teaching of Scripture every time they appoint one as a bishop who does not meet these qualifications!

Given this high self-estimation of their roles, it is easy to see why popes, cardinals, arch-bishops and bishops wear such ostentatious religious garb. They need to read Matthew 23:5 where Jesus condemned the Pharisees for wearing their fancy religious garb.

4. The Catholic Doctrine Of “Apostolic Succession:”

Catholics cite Acts 1:21-26 to prove that the apostles appointed their own replacements. However, Luke recorded nothing about “the apostles” appointing their successors. In fact, the text teaches that the apostles *did not* appoint their successors but relied upon Jesus to select Judas’ replacement. The apostle Peter plainly stated that it was the “Lord” Who chose Judas’ replacement, NOT the apostles. Acts 1:24 says, “*And they prayed and said, ‘You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen.’*” The apostles were mere instruments through whom the process unfolded and the selection was made. In fact, the apostles could not arbitrarily make such a choice, for according to verse 22 there were specific qualifications that had to be met in order for one to qualify. The potential candidate had to have been with them the whole time that the Lord went in and out among them and he had to have witnessed Christ after His resurrection (Acts 1:21, 22).

Let us remember that it was *Christ* who personally “ordained” the original twelve apostles (Mark 3:14-19). In the same way that Christ personally selected the original twelve apostles, He also selected Matthias as Judas’ replacement. Christ would later appear to Saul of Tarsus and also ordain him as an apostle (Acts 9:3-5). NO apostle was ever appointed by another apostle or by any other mere man. The doctrine of apostolic succession is unbiblical. Along with the doctrine of monarchical bishops, it has provided a mechanism through which Catholic leaders have fueled their power-lust and exerted tremendous control over other the masses.

5. The Catholic Church Accepts The Writings Of The So-Called “Church Fathers” As Authoritative:

Catholics regularly cite the writings of *Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna, Papias of Hierapolis, Hermas of Rome, Irenaeus of Lyon, Justin Martyr, Tertullian* and others.

Many claim that the book of Hebrews was authored by Clement of Rome! This simply cannot be true. The timing won't allow it.

Catholics cite the statement of Irenaeus that Polycarp was *“by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna...”* He meant “lone” bishop, which was the Catholic tradition by that time and this statement provides us with an example of the error that had crept into the church by the time of Irenaeus. His statement proves that he was not inspired by God, for the apostles would not have unilaterally appointed a bishop in a church and they certainly would not have appointed a *one-man* bishop of a church! Such would contradict the plain teaching of the New Testament concerning the plurality of bishops in a local church.

While many of their writings provide commentary and historical information and perspective, the writings of the “church fathers” were not and are not inspired. These men were no more inspired than I am. Neither Clement's nor my writings are inspired or authoritative. Christ is the One with *“all authority”* (Matthew 28:18, *not the pope, nor Clement, nor me nor any other human*). Furthermore, Christ's authority has been expressed in the law of His gospel (1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2; James 1:25; John 12:48 + Romans 1:16 + 1 Peter 1:25). Sin is committed why people violate the gospel law (1 Timothy 1:9-11). Peter sinned when he failed to *“walk upright according to truth of the gospel”* (Galatians 2:14). Neither Clement, Ignatius, Irenaeus nor any other so-called “church father” serve as the standard of what is right from wrong. Their writings have historical value but they also reflect many of the doctrinal errors and misconceptions of their time.

The New Testament states that the “Scriptures” are inspired of God (2 Timothy 3:16). The men through whom the Scriptures were revealed were mere tools in the revelatory process. Spirit-guided men “spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20-21; see also Matthew 10:19, 20; 1 Thessalonians 4:8). To listen to a Spirit-guided man was to listen to both Christ and the Father (Luke 10:16). The end result of their work was the revelation of “the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:10-16).

Catholics quote from the “church fathers” in an effort to defend certain doctrines and practices of the Catholic church. However, not only were these men *not inspired*, they were not even faithful Christians. By the time these “church fathers” acquired their religious influence a great apostasy had occurred within the Lord's church. The apostle Paul prophesied that a corruption would arise from within the very eldership of the Ephesian church. Certain men would “rise up and draw away disciples” (Acts 20:28-31). Secular history confirms that a “chief” bishop soon arose in that church, contrary to God's design of shared rule by the local church bishops (elders).

Proponents of error always defend their own error. Catholics use the teaching of early Catholics in their effort to defend Catholicism. This would be like me quoting from my fellow gospel preachers as proofs against Catholicism and in defense of churches of Christ! This approach to interpretation is illogical, inappropriate and ineffective, for the

words of uninspired men are proof of absolutely nothing. Only the words of God can distinguish truth from error (1 John 4:1 & 6; Acts 17:2-3; Hebrews 4:12).

6. The Catholic Church Claims To Have Had A “Magisterial Role” In The Canonization Of Scripture:

The term “canonization” refers to the process by which religious materials were determined to be authentic and inspired. While it is true that Bible scholars followed certain criteria for determining the authenticity of materials, the New Testament books and letters were inspired *at the time they were written* and they were recognized as being such by those who received them. Referring to his teaching to the Corinthians on marriage, Paul said, “*And so I ordain in all churches*” (1 Corinthians 7:17). Paul could “ordain” these instructions because he was an apostle. The 2 Corinthian letter was written to the church and to “*all the saints which are in Achaia*” (2 Cor. 1:1). The Galatian letter was written to all of “*the churches*” of Galatia (Galatians 1:2). The Colossian letter was intended also for the Laodiceans (Colossians 4:16). Peter’s first letter was written to saints in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1 Peter 1:1). Peter corroborated the teachings of Paul, even classifying them as *Scripture* (2 Peter 3:15, 16). Paul asserted that the things that he wrote were “*the commandments of the Lord*” and the things “*expressly*” spoken by the Holy Spirit (1 Timothy 4:1). The divine origin and broad application of these writings was established when they were written — not hundreds of years later by the Catholic church.

We should also note that the Catholic Bible contains *more* than just the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New. By including what’s known as the *Apocrypha*, the Catholics demonstrate their lack of real concern about the integrity of the Scriptures. The Jews recognized as their canon *the same 39 books* that we have in our present Bibles. When Jesus spoke of fulfilling all that was written “*in the Law of Moses and in the Prophets and in the Psalms*” concerning Him (Luke 24:44), He confirmed the validity of those exact 39 books! While it is true that the Septuagint later added apocryphal literature to those 39 Old Testament books, it did not originally contain them, for the Jews did not accept them as legitimate. I refer here to the books of Tobit, Judith, Additions to Esther, Additions to Daniel, the Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, the Letter of Jeremiah and 1 and 2 Maccabees. They are excluded from the major translations for several good reasons.

7. The Catholic View Of Religious Tradition:

Catholics use a combination of creeds, traditions, papal edicts and Scripture to establish authority for their practices. Catholic commentators regularly cite “traditions” to prove their positions.

Catholics (and others) cite Paul’s reference to “traditions” in 1 Corinthians 11:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:15 and 2 Thessalonians 3:6 to justify the use of non-biblical sources of authority. However, they fail to consider the meaning of the term “tradition” as used in the New Testament. None of these verses teach that practices are authorized on the

mere basis that they were established long ago or that they have been practiced for a long time.

The word translated “tradition” (Greek, *paradosis*) simply means a thing *given over* or *passed down*. The word does not speak to the *source* of the saying or practice, it merely emphasizes the fact that it has been handed down or passed on. In the above passages the things *handed down* were handed down from the apostles — Not from some extra-biblical and uninspired people or sources! The apostles were the “ambassadors” (official spokesmen) of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). They were thus authorized to “pass on” the things of God. This is the precise point of 1 Corinthians 2:9-16. The apostles received the Father’s instructions from the Holy Spirit and they “passed” them “along” to other people in the form of oral and/or written instructions.

8. The Catholic Doctrine Of Transubstantiation:

The Catholic Encyclopedia says, “*In the Eucharist the Body and Blood of the God-man are truly, really, and substantially present for the nourishment of our souls, by reason of the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, and that in this change of substances the unbloody Sacrifice of the New Testament is also contained.*”

Catholics claim that in the “eucharist” (Lord’s Supper), the bread becomes the literal body of Christ and the juice becomes His literal blood. They do not believe the bread and juice to be representational. If this is true, then in the Lord’s Supper a piece of bread morphs into a piece of human flesh and is then eaten by parishioners. This would mean that the constituent elements of *bread* and *juice* are miraculously transformed into bodily tissues and fluids. The partaker *knows full well* that this is not true. Communion observers *know* that they are not consuming Christ’s actual flesh and blood in the so-called eucharist!

Jesus told His disciples to eat the (unleavened) *bread* (Matt. 26:26, 17) and drink *fruit of the vine* to commemorate His death (Matt. 26:27-29). The bread was called “bread” because it possessed the constituent properties of bread. The juice was called “juice” because it possessed the constituent properties of juice. Jesus was physically with those disciples when He instructed them to eat the bread and drink the juice and the disciples did not eat the flesh or drink the blood of Jesus! They ate and drank something other than the actual flesh and blood of Jesus.

In 1 Corinthians 11:24, 25, Paul repeated these instructions to the Corinthians, which means that they too were to eat unleavened bread and drink fruit of the vine to remember the body and blood of Jesus. They were not eating the actual flesh of Jesus. The apostles didn’t do so, nor did the Corinthians, nor do we.

Some claim that 1 Corinthians 11:29 supports the doctrine of transubstantiation. It does not. Paul’s caution against *not discerning* the Lord’s body was a caution against failing to *remember* the Lord’s body and blood when observing the respective *representative* elements of the Lord’s Supper.

Catholics sometimes cite John 6:52-58 and John 6:66-69 to prove the doctrine of transubstantiation. Jesus there instructed people to eat His flesh and drink His blood. However, this is not a Lord's Supper passage and cannot be used to define specific actions related to the observance of the Lord's Supper.

People conveniently ignore the verses between the two texts cited above. Verse 63 is essential for a proper understanding of the context. It says, *"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life."* The point is clear. When Jesus told disciples that they must eat His flesh and drink His blood, He did not literally refer to His *physical* flesh and blood. He meant that they must partake of His WORDS. He explained that it was His "words" that were spiritual and life-giving! Failure (or refusal) to accept Christ's explanation results in a dangerous and hideous distortion of the text.

Ironically, by literalizing the Lord's words in John 6:54-56 Catholics commit the same error as did the unbelieving Jews who were in Jesus' audience. Like the Catholics, thinking only materially, they also thought that Jesus was speaking of His actual flesh and blood (v. 52).

Verses 44 and 45 of this same chapter cannot be ignored on this point, for they provide a basis for what Jesus is encouraging listeners to do. Jesus said, *"It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me"* (v. 45). These words of Christ immediately preceded His discussions about the bread that came down from heaven. Verse 45 teaches the same thing as verse 63 (and Matthew 4:4 — *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."*).

John 6 does not teach that disciples are supposed to ingest the literal flesh and blood of Jesus when observing the Lord's Supper.

9. Catholics Use Mechanical Instruments Of Music In Their Worship To God:

The New Testament specifically commands *vocal* music in worship to God. Ephesians 5:19 says, *"speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."* The Corinthian church was told to *"sing with the Spirit and sing with the understanding also"* when gathered for worship (1 Corinthians 14:15, 26). Colossians 3:16 says, *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."* Several other passages specify *singing* as the kind of music authorized by God for use in worship (Matthew 26:30; Acts [16:25](#); Romans 15:9; Hebrews 2:12).

Bible students know that there are two types of authority: *generic* and *specific*. In cases of generic authority one is free to use whatever lawful means and methods necessary to follow the generic instruction. For example, when Jesus commanded the apostles to "go" (Mark 16:15), He did not specify *how* they were to go, but left the options to them (walk, use carriages, ships, beasts...etc — Acts 21:15; 27:2; 23:24).

However, when God *specifies* a certain kind of thing within a general class, then people are obligated to use or do that thing. Had God told Noah to make an ark “of wood,” Noah could have used any type of wood that he desired. However, God said, “*Make yourself an ark of gopher wood...*” (Genesis 6:14). This specificity required Noah to use “gopher” wood as opposed to some other type of wood. God’s specificity excluded the use of other types of wood. Had God told New Testament worshippers to “make music,” then we would be authorized to use any kind of music whether *mechanical or vocal*. However, since He specified *singing*, we are obligated to sing.

There is no New Testament authority to use mechanical instruments of music in worship to God. To “go beyond the doctrine of Christ” or “add to” the word of God is sinful and wrong (2 John 9; Revelation 22:18).

10. The Catholic Church Practices Infant Baptism:

The New Testament nowhere authorizes or teaches the practice of infant baptism. According to the New Testament one is a candidate for baptism only if he can:

- *Hear and understand* the gospel (Acts 2:37,38; 8:12; 10:33, 47,48; 16:30-33; 18:8; Romans 10:17)
- *Believe* in God and believe the gospel (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:41; 8:12,13, 36-38; 16:30-33; 18:8; Romans 10:17; Galatians 3:26,27)
- *Repent* of his sins (Acts 2:38; 3:19)
- *Confess* Jesus as the Son of God (Matthew 10:32; 16:16; John 11:27; Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9,10)

Infants cannot do any of these things and are therefore incapable of being scripturally baptized.

Catholics and others cite the “household” baptism passages of Acts 16:15, 16:33 and 1 Corinthians 1:16 as proof that the Bible teaches infant baptism. NONE of these passages say anything about baptizing *infants!* What they do say is that **believers** were baptized. I am always surprised at how quickly proponents of infant baptism overlook this obvious fact.

Acts 16:15 is cited but people conveniently ignore verse 14 which says, “*One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.*” And why did she “pay attention” to what Paul said? Because “*faith comes by hearing the word of God*” (Romans 10:17), and faith is a prerequisite of baptism. Jesus said, “*He who believes and is baptized shall be saved*” (Mark 16:16; Galatians 3:26, 27).

They cite Acts 16:33 but conveniently ignore verses 30-32 which say, “*Then he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ And they said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ And they spoke the*

word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.” Verse 33 then speaks of the jailor and his family being baptized.

According to these verses, in order to be scripturally baptized, the people had to first *believe*. Like we saw in the case of Lydia and her family, in order to “believe” they had to first *hear* the gospel message (this is more fully explained in Romans 10:13-15). Once one hears, understands and believes the gospel he is qualified to be baptized. Unbelievers are incapable of being biblically and scripturally baptized. This means either that all of the members of the jailor’s household were capable of belief or it means that the word “household” in this context refers only to those who believed. We do know that the passage says nothing about “babies” or “baptizing babies.”

Acts 18:8 is very helpful on this point. It says, *“Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.”* Notice that Crispus and his entire household heard and “BELIEVED in the Lord,” and along with many other Corinthians, were baptized. Those of Crispus’ household were capable of *believing in the Lord*. Infants are incapable of doing this.

People make the same mistake with 1 Corinthians 1:16. They cite this one verse because it speaks of Paul baptizing the “household of Stephanas,” but they miss the main point of the entire context. Paul explains that it was not the identity of the *baptizer* that made baptism relevant: It was the fact of the candidate’s *belief* in the gospel message that made it meaningful. 1 Corinthians 1:21 says, *“For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who BELIEVE.”* As we noted from Jesus’ words in Mark 16:16, baptism is meaningful only if it is practiced by a believer!

Catholic arguments also ignore passages requiring repentance and confession for salvation. Infants can do neither. Peter told people on Pentecost that they had to *“repent and be baptized”* in order to receive the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38). Paul told the Romans that *“with the heart one believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”* (Romans 10:10). Conversion examples are quite uniform on this point. Saul (later named Paul) acknowledged Christ as “Lord” (Acts 9:5), stopped his plans to persecute saints (repented) and was baptized (Acts 9:18). The Ethiopian eunuch heard Christ preached, believed the message, confessed and was baptized (Acts 8:35-38).

Some Catholics claim that people make too much out of the eunuch’s confession. They admit that he confessed and that his confession was a good thing, but they claim that his example does not prevent an adult from making a confession on behalf of an infant. Let us remember that we are obligated to speak where God speaks (1 Peter 4:11). If God’s silence authorizes, we would be authorized to do any number of things in God’s name. However, silence does not authorize, as is proven by Hebrews 7:11-14. Neither Acts 8:37 nor any other passage teaches proxy confession, nor does it authorize infant baptism. What it teaches is that one must believe in order to be

baptized — exactly what we learn from Acts 16:30-33; Mark 16:16 and other passages.

The Catholic church has no biblical authority to practice infant baptism, nor is there any reason to baptize babies in the first place.

11. The Catholic Church Teaches The Doctrine Of Inherited Sin:

The Catholic church baptizes babies because they believe in *inherited sin*. The Bible teaches that sin is *NOT inherited*. It teaches that sin is *committed* as an exercise of individual freewill (John 8:34; 1 John 3:4). Neither sin nor its spiritual consequences are “inherited.” *“The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son...”* (Ezekiel 18:20).

Like Calvinists, Catholics cite Romans 5:12 to prove inherited sin. However, it states that *“death passed upon all,”* NOT because of inheritance, but *“because all have sinned.”* This passage is shamelessly misused by Catholics and Calvinists.

Catholics claim that humans began to inherit sin as a result of the “fall” of man in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3). Many people believe that the sin of Adam and Eve affected people physically with sickness and genetic flaws, and that their *spiritual* flaws would have also passed on to their posterity.

The Bible nowhere teaches that it was Adam and Eve’s *sin* that produced genetic flaws and physical ailments. Rather, it was their being cast out of the garden of Eden that led to physical problems for mankind (Genesis 3:14-19). As noted above, sin is not inherited. Ezekiel 28:15 says, *“You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till unrighteousness was found in you.”* (The word “until” implies a beginning point.) Romans 7:9 states that Paul *“was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.”* (Paul reached the point of accountability and was indicted as a sinner by the law of God.)

The doctrine of inherited sin denies basic free agency. The Bible tells us that we can choose whether to serve God or to serve sin (Romans 6:14-16)

12. The Catholic Church Practices *Sprinkling* For Baptism:

The very word “baptism” (Greek, *baptizo*) means *to bury, to submerge*. Two New Testament verses explicitly confirm this meaning. Romans 6:4 and Colossians 2:12 say, *“Buried with Him in baptism...”* When Jesus was baptized He *“came up out of the water”* (Matthew 3:16). When the eunuch was baptized, both he and Philip *“went down into”* and came *“up out of”* the water (Acts 8:38, 39). John baptized in Aenon *“because there was much water there”* (John 3:23). While “much water” is required for immersing people, not much water is required for sprinkling. New Testament baptism is administered by *submersion* in water — not by *sprinkling* of water. By very definition — *sprinkling* is not *baptism*.

13. The Catholic Church Has A *Separate Priesthood* From The Common People:

The New Testament teaches that every Christian is a priest. Speaking to “Christians” (1 Peter 4:16), Peter said, *“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession...”* (1 Peter 2:9). The apostle John described saints as *“a kingdom and priests to our God”* (Revelation 5:10). Under the law of Christ, every Christian is a priest because the one-time sacrifice of Christ enables saints to have a direct relationship with God. Every saint has *“boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus”* (Hebrews 10:19).

14. Catholics Venerate The Virgin Mary (The Mother of Jesus):

The Catholic doctrine of the “assumption of Mary” teaches that upon her death, Mary’s body was assumed into heaven. Because she was the mother of (King) Jesus, Catholics call Mary the *“Queen of Heaven.”* The title *Mary Queen of Heaven* developed out of the *Council of Ephesus* in AD 431. Catholics cite “the woman clothed with the sun” in Revelation 12:1 as proof of this special exaltation of Mary. However, that passage is not intended to be taken literally, and most likely refers to God’s people as a whole, not to a single individual. The Bible teaches no such doctrine as the “assumption” of Mary or that Mary is a “queen.” Prayers to Mary are also unauthorized.

Elizabeth did say that Mary was *“blessed among women”* (Luke 1:42). However, as great as Mary’s role was in giving birth to Jesus, she remained a mere human being. She was an ordinary woman on whom an extraordinary miracle was performed. Though she conceived Jesus through miraculous means (Matthew 1:18), her nature was *human*. She was *materially* and compositionally no different from any other woman. Luke 11 tells the story of another woman who later honored the mother of Jesus by saying to Jesus, *“Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed...”* Jesus replied, *“Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it”* (Luke 11:27, 28)! Jesus clearly taught that Mary was no greater than others who hear and keep God’s word.

15. Catholics Venerate And Pray To Dead Saints And Others:

Not only do Catholics pray to the virgin Mary, they also pray to other dead “saints.” They believe in the doctrine of “the communion of the saints” (Apostles’ Creed, 4th century AD), which authorizes prayers to be offered to dead saints who allegedly serve an intercessory role for others. The New Testament teaches that *Christ* is our only intercessor (Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1; 1 Timothy 2:5).

New Testament apostles always condemned the worship and exaltation of mere humans (Acts 10:25, 26; Acts 14:13-15).

16. Catholics Venerate Relics And Objects:

Catholics venerate relics and objects such as crosses, beads, so-called “holy water” and “blessed palms,” the bones, ashes, clothing and possessions of “holy people.” Catholic church buildings also fall into this category. They are some of the most costly,

ornate and beautiful facilities that you will see in some cities. Some people equate the sense of aesthetic pleasure that they experience from viewing these structures to *spirituality* and then conclude that the Catholic church makes them feel more “spiritual.” While humans are certainly aesthetic creatures, a terrible mistake is made by equating physical *objects* with *spirituality*. While Catholics *officially* claim *not* to worship these relics and objects, their practice still violates New Testament teaching. When the apostle Paul condemned the Athenians for their idolatry he said, “*The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything*” (Acts [17:24](#), 25). Paul explicitly teaches that God is not worshipped by things fabricated and sculpted by human hands. This divine prohibition has always been in force. The Jews were also forbidden by God to make objects to which they would attach some spiritual or religious significance (Deuteronomy 4:17-25; 5:8).

17. The Catholic Church On The Consumption Of Alcohol:

A commentator on the catholic.com website wrote, “Alcohol consumption in moderation is not immoral. But we should avoid the abuse of alcohol just as we should avoid the abuse of any food, drug, or other substance.” He then cited rule number 2290 of the Catholic catechism: “The virtue of temperance disposes us to avoid every kind of excess: the abuse of food, alcohol, tobacco, or medicine.”

Because of this, as one study states, “the Catholic church has a drinking problem.” This is anecdotal, but almost all of the Catholics that I have known over the years do consume alcohol to some degree. Some people have even admitted to being Catholic because the Catholic church allows them to use alcohol.

As noted above, Catholics do condemn drunkenness, but like many others, they defend the casual and recreational use of alcohol in degrees that do not amount to “excess,” that is, drunkenness. In order to hold this view they must ignore some very plain Bible passages:

1 Peter 4:3 says, “*For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles — when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.*” Though it may not be immediately obvious to the casual reader of this verse, Peter here condemns three different levels of alcohol consumption — “drunkenness” (full-blown inebriation, a drunken stupor), “revelries” (not yet incapacitated, but emotionally “high” (merry) and with a loss of moral inhibitions), and “drinking parties” (social drinking, wine sipping). Many alcohol users condemn only drunkenness, but the Bible here condemns other levels of alcohol consumption.

“Drunkenness” requires little explanation, for it was in Peter’s day what it is today — inebriation. This condition is repeatedly condemned in Scripture (Romans 13:13; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:10; Galatians 5:21). A person in this condition has lost control of

his faculties and behavior. He might even lose consciousness or even die from alcohol poisoning. As noted above, six people die every day in America from alcohol poisoning.

“Revelries” is translated from the Greek word “komos,” which describes the condition of drinkers prior to full-blown drunkenness. This word describes the excited, festal and uncontrolled spirit of the alcohol consumer. Like Nabal of old (1 Samuel 25:36), he has imbibed to the point of having a “merry heart.” In our modern vernacular he is a “party-animal.” One in this condition might be loud and emotional. He might sing loudly. He might be insulting and inconsiderate of others. He might even harm others. He has little control over his thoughts and actions. He is given to other vices, particularly sexual sin and violence.

“Drinking parties” is translated from the Greek word “potos,” which is not necessarily excessive, but “gives opportunity for excess.” This word describes a level of drinking that is very common in many cultures — social drinking or “sipping” of wine. Many people, including many “Christians,” try to defend social drinking (beer after work, wine or liquor after a meal, bourbon or other whiskey at a business transaction...etc), but Peter’s condemnation of “potos” prohibits this level of drinking along with reveling and drunkenness.

Ephesians 5:18 — *“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.”* By considering this verse alongside its companion of Colossians 3:16, we understand that Paul is telling people to turn to the *words of Christ* for their courage and comfort, rather than to alcohol. Alcohol leads, not to orderly and productive behavior, but to *“reckless actions”* (Holeman Bible, Eph. 5:18). Many people turn to alcohol for comfort, courage and confidence, but it is God’s word that best helps us to acquire these qualities. People should turn to the Scriptures for *comfort* (Romans 15:4), *courage* (1 Corinthians 16:13; Ephesians 6:10), and *confidence* (Proverbs 14:34; 2 Timothy 1:12). They should not turn to alcohol.

Proverbs 20:1 - *“Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.”* Solomon uses a figure of speech called *personification* to represent alcohol as a deceiver. He means that the very chemical properties of alcohol have this effect upon its users. As every alcohol user knows, there are often unintended, unpleasant and even destructive consequences of alcohol use. No man begins his evening of drinking with the express purpose of entering a brawl, beating up his wife or children, raping his girlfriend or killing or maiming himself or someone else in a car crash. However, these things are regularly done by alcohol consumers. Alcohol is “a mocker” because it causes people to do things that they would not otherwise do and act in ways that they would not otherwise act. The wine, beer or bourbon may look appealing in the glass or bottle, *“but at the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder”* (Proverbs 23:31-32).

18. Catholics On Salvation:

Catholics are substitutionists, so they believe that Jesus vicariously and literally took upon Him all of the sins of mankind when He died on the cross. They believe that all humans are saved by that one-time act. However, they also teach that salvation is an ongoing process and that forgiveness is based upon:

- Participation in the “eucharist,” since Jesus described the cup as “*the New Testament in my blood which is shed for many for the remission of sins*” (Matthew 26:28). Catholics claim from this verse that sin is forgiven by one’s observing the communion. However, this verse in no way teaches this notion. Jesus here states that His *blood* contained forgiveness power. The communion served the memorial purpose of *reminding* partakers of that fact.
- Going to confession. Catholics cite John 20:22-23 in support of the concept of the confessional and absolution by priests. Jesus said to the apostles, “...*Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them: if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.*” Of course, this aspect of the great commission is explained in Acts 2:38, where we learn that the apostle’s power was exerted through their preaching. Sin was forgiven upon the basis of condition-meeting.
- Last rites. Catholics cite James 5:14-15 as a “last rites” passage. It is not, for forgiveness is conditioned upon repentance (Luke 13:3, 5). One may lead a prayer for another, but this does not result in “absolution.” Only God can forgive.

As noted earlier, Catholics also practice infant baptism for sin.

Conclusion

Their cathedrals are large, elaborate and ornate. Their popes, cardinals, bishops and priests are adorned with fancy religious garb. They fund and operate many programs for the poor and needy. However, the Catholic church is not the church of the Bible. It teaches and practices many errors which must be opposed. I have attempted in this study to give book, chapter and verse answers to the errors that I have addressed. I hope that readers will carefully consider these passages before reaching any conclusions. Christians walk by faith, not by sight (2 For. 5:7). That “faith” comes only by hearing God’s word (Acts 15:7; Rom. 10:17). Fellowship with God is predicated upon our continuing in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9). We must accept the Bible as our only guide of faith and practice.

Tim Haile

timhaile@me.com