

Is the Sacrament of Mass Biblical and is it Necessary for Salvation?

The Eucharist (or Mass)—the single most important of the Roman Catholic sacraments— involves a resacrificing of Jesus (or, more accurately, a “re-presenting” or “renewing” of the sacrifice of Jesus) over and over again. We are told that the Mass constitutes a *“true and proper sacrifice.”* Karl Keating writes, *“The Church insists that the Mass is the continuation and re-presentation of the sacrifice of Calvary.”* The Catholic Encyclopedia asserts, *“We may establish that the Eucharist is a true sacrifice.”* Whether you call it “resacrifice” or “re-presenting” the sacrifice, Roman Catholics say that in every single Mass, God is appeased.

It is here that we must explore the answer to the question, *“Does the sacrament of the mass appease God?”*

Not only is the answer to the question a resounding “no” but we must also explore why this is a completely unbiblical doctrine.

The Mass is an Unbiblical Doctrine

There are at least 4 reasons this is an unbiblical doctrine that include (1) the Mass detracts from the atonement of Christ on the cross as a once-for-all and perfect sacrifice, (2) the bread and the wine do not turn into the literal body and blood of Christ and that doctrine is nowhere to be found in Scripture, (3) the Mass contradicts the promise of the priesthood of believers at the moment of salvation, and (4) there is no biblical support for the Mass anywhere in Scripture.

1. The Mass detracts from the atonement of Christ on the cross as a once-for-all and perfect sacrifice.

Roman Catholics believe that the Mass really does not detract from the atonement wrought by Christ at the cross. Protestants respond by reminding Catholics of what the Council of Trent said: *“This sacrifice [of the Mass] is truly propitiatory....For by this oblation the Lord is appeased...and he pardons wrongdoing and sins, even grave ones.”* Because the Mass is said to bring about the forgiveness of sins, it is a necessity in the Catholic system of salvation.

This very much detracts from the final salvation that Christ accomplished at the cross (see **John 19:30**). For Protestants the idea that the Mass is in any sense a repetition of the death of Christ seems reminiscent of the repeated sacrifices of the old covenant, which were “a reminder of sins year by year” (**Hebrews 10:3**). As opposed to believers having the full assurance of complete forgiveness of sins through the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ (**Hebrews 10:12**), the Mass gives a constant reminder of sins and remaining guilt to be atoned for week after week.

Ask...

- Did you know that **Hebrews 10:3** says that the sacrifices of the Old Covenant were a constant reminder of sin and need for constant atonement for that sin until the once-for-all sacrifice came?
- Doesn't the Catholic Mass resemble Old Covenant sacrifices even though Jesus, the once-for-all sacrifice has come? Can you see how that greatly detracts from the work Christ has done on the cross?

Protestants are resolute in their conviction that Scripture strongly argues against the doctrine of the Mass. Recall what Jesus said upon the cross in regard to His sacrificial death: “*It is finished*” (**John 19:30**). This proclamation from the Savior’s lips is fraught with meaning. The Lord was doing more than announcing the termination of His physical life. That fact was self-evident. What was not known by those who were carrying out the brutal business at Calvary was that somehow, despite the sin they were committing, God through Christ had completed the final sacrifice for sin. The work long contemplated, long promised, long expected by prophets and saints, is done.

It is highly significant that the phrase “it is finished” can also be translated “paid in full.” The backdrop to this is that in ancient days, whenever someone was found guilty of a crime, the offender was put in jail and a “certificate of debt” was posted on the jail door (**Colossians 2:14**). This certificate listed all the crimes the offender was found guilty of. Upon release, after serving the prescribed time in jail, the offender was given the certificate of debt, and on it was stamped

“paid in full.” Christ took the certificate of debt of all our lives (including all our sins) and nailed it on the cross. And Jesus said, “paid in full” upon the cross (**John 19:30**).

Hence, Jesus’ words do not constitute a moan of defeat nor a sigh of patient resignation. Rather, His words were a triumphant recognition that He had now fully accomplished what He came into the world to do. The work of redemption was completed at the cross. Nothing further needed to be done. He had paid in full the price of our redemption (**2 Corinthians 5:21**). And “*when He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high*” (**Hebrews 1:3**), where He remains to this day.

Ask...

- How do you reconcile Jesus’s statement from the cross, “*It is finished*” (**John 19:30**) with the resacrificing of Jesus at every Catholic Mass?

Jesus completed the work of redemption at the cross with a single once-for-all sacrifice. No more sacrifices (or “representings”) would occur. It was a “done deal”—a finished transaction—at that point. Consider the Book of Hebrews. God assures believers that “their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more” (**Hebrews 10:17**). And “*where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin*” (**10:18**). Christ made a sacrificial offering “*once for all when He offered up Himself*” (**7:27**). He did so “*not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption*” (**9:12**). By the death of Christ “*we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*” (**10:10**).

Ask...

- Would you please read **Hebrews 10:18**?
- How do you reconcile this with the continual “re-presentings” of Christ’s sacrifice in the Mass?

Let’s now explore what happens during the Mass in regards to communion and explore whether or not this is consistent with what Scripture teaches.

2. The bread and wine do not turn into the literal body and blood of Christ and that doctrine is nowhere to be found in Scripture.

Luke 22:19-20 is often used by the Catholic Church to support the doctrine of transubstantiation (belief that the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Christ during communion). Here Jesus says that the bread and wine are His body and blood.

But, notice that Jesus is physically present with them here so He couldn't have meant that literally. It's also incredibly important to note that Jesus is speaking to Jews who would have been schooled in the Old Testament, which strictly forbids anyone from drinking blood.

Ask...

- Would you please read **Genesis 9:4 and Leviticus 3:17**?
- Since the disciples, who were schooled in the Old Testament, would have known that drinking blood is strictly forbidden, how do you reconcile that with Jesus teaching them to supposedly drink His blood as taught by the Catholic Church?

John 6:51-55 is probably the most heavily used passage to supposedly support the doctrine of transubstantiation. But upon exploration and study of this passage it is clear that this passage in no way supports that doctrine and actually has nothing to do with communion.

Looking at the context of this passage we see that Jesus just fed 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fishes. Then in **John 6:26-27** Jesus launches into His main message. ²⁶ *Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ²⁷ Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal."* The crowd had just had their physical hunger satisfied but Jesus taught that He actually came to fulfill their spiritual hunger which comes through taking Him into their lives for salvation.

The context for understanding Jesus's statement in **John 6:54** is unpacked for us in **John 6:40**. Taken in context, this has everything to do with salvation and nothing to do with the Lord's Supper. **John 6:53-54** is saying that just as one must take in physical food in order to sustain physical life one must take in Christ as his spiritual food in order to have physical life. Let's ask and explore the following questions as well in regard to transubstantiation...

Ask...

- If **John 6:48-58** were referring to the Mass, why isn't wine mentioned along with the bread?
- Doesn't this simple fact automatically disqualify this passage from being about the Mass or the Lord's Supper?
- Did you know that there are multiple other passages in Scripture that use eating and drinking to draw an analogy to our relationship with God?
- Would you please read **Psalm 34:8, 63:1, 119:103; 1 Peter 2:3; Hebrews 5:14**?

3. The Mass contradicts the promise of the priesthood of believers at the moment of salvation.

Scripture is clear that because Jesus came to earth as God, died as the perfect sacrifice for all of our sins, and then rose again validating that He has the power over sin and death, that we as believers are now completely cleansed of sin and therefore have direct access to God Almighty as priests unto Him, with no need of earthly priests to go to God on our behalf.

Ask...

- Would you please read **Matthew 27:51**?
- Did you know that the veil in the temple was there as a reminder that sin separated man from God? Do you realize that the tearing of that veil, from top to bottom, was God's way of letting us know that we now have direct access to Him as a priesthood of believers, with no need for an earthly priest?
- Would you please read the following verses validating this very fact... **1 Peter 2:5; Revelation 1:6, 5:10, and 20:6**?

As priests to God the sacrifices we are to offer up to God are clear in Scripture and include offering our bodies as a sacrifice (**Romans 12:1**) and engaging in a sacrifice of praise to Him (**Hebrews 13:15**). There is nothing in Scripture that even remotely alludes to the sacrifices that are practiced in the Catholic Mass.

4. There is no biblical support for the Mass anywhere in Scripture.

Not only is there no biblical support for the Mass anywhere in Scripture, but there is actually biblical support against anything like the Mass and the “re-sacrificing” of Jesus.

Ask...

- Would you please read **Romans 6:9**?
- Isn't it clear from this verse that the Roman Catholic Mass is unbiblical and in no way compatible with Christ's finished work on the cross and resurrection from the dead?

So, is the Catholic Church's teaching regarding salvation being something that must be worked for and sustained through good works and sacraments consistent with the Scriptures?

Let's look at numerous reasons why salvation is not based off meritorious works and is based on forensic (legal) justification. Catholic expert Ron Rhodes lists at least nine different pieces of evidence for justification being instantaneous, once-for-all, and entirely by grace in his book *The 10 Most Important Things You Can Say to a Catholic*:

1. Justification is a singular and instantaneous event.

The Bible portrays justification as a singular event in which God declares the believing sinner to be righteous. It is not based on performance or good works. It involves God's instantaneous pardoning of the sinner, declaring him or her to be absolutely righteous at the moment he or she trusts in Christ for salvation (**Romans 3:25,28,30; 8:33,34; Galatians 4:21-5:12; 1 John 1:7-2:2**).

2. Justification involves a legal declaration by God.

Negatively, this word means that a person is once-for-all pronounced not guilty before God. Positively, the word means that a person is once-for-all pronounced righteous before God. The very righteousness of Christ is imputed (or credited) to the believer's life. From the moment a person places faith in Christ the Savior, God sees that person through the lens of Christ's righteousness. This view is often referred to as "forensic justification." "Forensic" comes from a Latin word meaning "forum." This word has its roots in the fact that in the ancient Roman forum, a court could meet and make judicial, or legal, declarations. Forensic justification, then, speaks of God's judicial declaration of the believer's righteousness before Him. The believer is legally acquitted of all guilt, and the very righteousness of Christ is imputed to his account. Henceforth, when God sees the believer, He sees him in all the righteousness of Christ.

3. Justification is external to man, and it does not hinge on man's personal level of righteousness.

It does not hinge on anything that man does. It hinges solely on God's declaration. Even while the person is still a sinner and is experientially not righteous, he is nevertheless righteous in God's sight because of forensic justification. This view of justification has support from the Old Testament. For example, in **Deuteronomy 25:1** we read of judges who "justify the righteous and condemn the wicked" (emphasis added). The word justify here clearly means "declare to be righteous" just as condemn means "declare to be guilty." The word is used in a forensic sense here and elsewhere in the Old Testament (see, for example, **Job 27:5** and **Proverbs 17:15**). When the apostle Paul (an Old Testament scholar par excellence) used the word justify in the Book of Romans, he did so against this Old Testament backdrop.

4. Justification is once-for-all.

At the moment a person places personal faith in Christ, God makes an incalculable "deposit" of righteousness into that person's personal "spiritual bank account." It is a once-for-all act on God's part. It is irrevocable. It is a "done deal." It cannot be lost. God's pronouncement is final. This is the wonderful gift of salvation.

5. Justification is based on the work of Christ on the cross.

God did not just subjectively decide to overlook man's sin or wink at his unrighteousness.

Justification has an objective basis. Indeed, Jesus died on the cross for us. He died in our stead and paid for our sins. Jesus ransomed us from death by His own death on the cross

(2 Corinthians 5:21). There has been a great exchange. As the great reformer Martin Luther put it, "Lord Jesus, you are my righteousness, I am your sin. You have taken upon yourself what is mine and given me what is yours. You have become what You were not so that I might become what I was not."

6. The result of justification is peace with God.

Romans 5:1 states, "Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (NIV). Put another way, the Father sees believers through the "lens" of Jesus Christ. And because there is peace between the Father and Jesus, there is also peace between the Father and believers, since believers are "in Christ" (**Romans 8:1**).

7. Justification comes through faith alone.

Scripture clearly teaches justification by faith in Christ alone (**Romans 4:1-25; Galatians 3:6-14**).

God justifies "the one who has faith in Jesus" (**Romans 3:26**). "A man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law" (**Romans 3:28**). "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness" (**Romans 4:3**). "Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (**Romans 5:1**).

8. Justification is based entirely on God's grace.

Romans 3:24 tells us that God's declaration of righteousness is given to believers "freely by his grace" (NIV). The word grace literally means "unmerited favor." It is because of God's unmerited favor that believers can freely be "declared righteous" before God.

The Bible makes virtually no reference to "sanctifying grace." In the Bible, grace is quite simply grace—and it refers to the unmerited favor of God. "Unmerited" means it cannot be worked for. But Catholicism teaches that one must do meritorious works to earn grace. If grace is not

free, though, it is not truly grace. “If it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace” (**Romans 11:6**).

Further, the idea that God’s grace is repeatedly communicated to His people through “sacraments” has no biblical basis. God’s grace is given to us not through ritual ceremonies but comes straight from Him to all who believe in the person of Jesus Christ: “Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God” (**Romans 5:1,2**).

Contrary to Roman Catholicism, merit plays no role in obtaining eternal life. From a biblical perspective, opting for the merit system can only be bad, since all of us “merit” one thing—eternal death—“for the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (**Romans 6:23**).

We simply cannot do good works to earn favor with God. Rather, our favor with God comes only as a result of placing faith in Christ, after which time the Father sees us as being “in Christ.” Experientially we may still be quite imperfect. But the Father sees us as having the very perfection of Christ since we are “in Christ” (**Romans 8:1**). As a result of our relationship with Christ, and as a result of walking in dependence on the Spirit, good works are increasingly produced in our lives. Good works are the result of our relationship with Christ, not the source of it.

One of my favorite passages in the Bible is **Psalms 130:3,4**: “*If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness*” (NIV). This passage is brimming with grace. The phrase “kept a record” referred, among the ancients, to keeping an itemized account. The point of the psalmist is that if God were keeping a detailed account of all our sins, there would be no way for us to have a relationship with Him. It would be impossible. The good news is that God does not keep such an itemized account but rather forgives those who trust in Christ.

True grace is sometimes hard for people to grasp. After all, our society is performance-oriented. Obtaining good grades in school depends on how well we perform in school. Climbing up the corporate ladder at work depends on how well we perform at work. In our society, nothing of any real worth is a “free ticket.” But God’s gift of salvation is a grace-gift. It is free! We cannot attain it by a good performance. **Ephesians 2:8,9** affirms this: *“By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”* **Titus 3:5** tells us that God *“saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy.”*

By contrast, **Romans 3:20** says that *“by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified [or declared righteous] in His sight”* (insert added). In **Galatians 2:16** the apostle Paul tells us that *“a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus.”*

9. Good works are a result of justification, not a condition for it.

Good works are a by-product of salvation (**Matthew 7:15-23; 1 Timothy 5:10,25**). Good works result from the changed purpose for living that salvation brings (**1 Corinthians 3:10-15**). We are not saved by our works, but in order to do good works. We do works not to get salvation, but because we have already gotten it.

Catholics will often respond by arguing that **James 2:17,26** teaches that good works are necessary for final salvation or justification. After all, in **James 2:17** we read: *“Faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.”* **Verse 26** likewise says, *“Just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.”*

However, James in this passage is simply answering the question, “How can we tell whether or not a person has true faith?” All that follows in **James 2** answers this question.

James begins by asking, “What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?” (**2:14**). Notice the oft-neglected little word “says” (“What use

is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith?”). Some people have genuine faith; others have an empty profession of faith that is not real. The first group of people who have genuine faith have works to back up the fact that their faith is genuine. Those who make an empty profession of faith show their lack of true faith by the absence of works. So, James answers his question by pointing out that you can tell whether a person has true faith by the test of works.

Martin Luther said it best: **James 2** is not teaching that a person is saved by works or by personal merit. Rather a person is “justified” (declared righteous before God) by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone. In other words, genuine faith will always result in or be accompanied by good works in the saved person’s life.

Keep in mind that James was writing to Jewish Christians (“to the twelve tribes”—**James 1:1**) who were in danger of giving nothing but lip-service to Jesus. His intent, therefore, was to distinguish true faith from false faith. He shows that true faith results in works, and become the visible evidence of true faith. (Ron Rhodes, *The 10 Most Important Things You Can Say to a Catholic*, pp. 73-74).

Apart from the spirit, the body is dead; it is a lifeless corpse. By analogy, apart from the evidence of good works, faith is dead. It is lifeless and nonproductive. That is what James is teaching in **James 2:17,26**. His focus is on the nature of faith, not on the reward of works.

Ask...

- Would you please read aloud from **Romans 3:20-26**?
- Do you agree with what the apostle Paul says in these verses?
- If so, how could one hold to the belief that good works are necessary for salvation?

Now that we have explored the erroneous views regarding the plan of salvation as presented by the Catholic Church, we must ask, “Are the traditions and scriptures (the Apocrypha) used by the Catholic Church divinely inspired by God as the true 66 books of the Bible are?”

Explore...

Is Catholic Church Tradition as Authoritative as Scripture?

Biblical Christianity teaches that the Word of God alone is authoritative and sufficient for revealing who God is, who we are, the plan of salvation and all other important doctrine and practice. Whereas most Roman Catholics believe that both Scripture and tradition constitute the Word of God and are authoritative.

Catholics generally offer three arguments in rejection of sola scriptura and in favor of the need for tradition:

1. **Not even the Bible argues for sola scriptura.** Catholic apologist Peter Kreeft said, “If we believe only what the Scripture teaches, we will not believe sola scriptura, for Scripture does not teach sola scriptura.” It is further argued that the early church did not even have the New Testament and depended on oral tradition. Since the early church was open to tradition, we also should be open to it.
2. **The Bible teaches the authority of tradition.** Catholics note that the apostle Paul wrote, “Brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us” (2 Thessalonians 2:15). He also wrote, “We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us” (2 Thessalonians 3:6). It is further argued that the apostle John actually preferred oral tradition: “I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink” (3 John 13).
3. **The Bible cannot be correctly interpreted without tradition.** Catholics say tradition is for the highest good of the church, because without it, we end up with division (multiple denominations), which is an “intolerable scandal” in view of the fact that Christ called the church to unity. The Bible alone (without tradition) is not “a safe guide as to what we are to believe.”

It is here that we will explore why the Bible alone is authoritative. In doing so we will look at seven keys as to why this is the case. Those seven keys include, 1) Tradition is to be respected but not exalted; 2) only the Bible is inspired; 3) an explicit statement of sola scriptura in the Bible is not necessary; 4) all apostolic tradition in regard to faith and practice is recorded in the New Testament; 5) Rome's claim that the Bible cannot be interpreted apart from tradition contains a fatal flaw; 6) Scripture sets parameters beyond which we are not free to go; and 7) the Bible verses Catholics cite in favor of tradition are misinterpreted.

The Biblical Teaching

(1) Tradition is to be respected but not exalted.

Christians who hold to sola scriptura do not say there never was a time when God's Word was spoken. Obviously there was such a time. But the teachings and traditions once communicated orally by the apostles were committed by them to writing for all generations to come. All that God intends us to have is found within the Scriptures.

(2) Only the Bible is inspired.

The biblical Greek word for inspiration (theopneustos) literally means "God breathed." In **2 Timothy 3:16** we read that "all Scripture is God-breathed". The Greek form here of this word indicates that the Bible is the result of the "breath of God." Because Scripture is breathed out by God—because it originates from Him—it is true and inerrant.

Biblical inspiration may be defined as God's superintending of the human authors so that, using their own individual personalities—and even their writing styles—they composed and recorded without error His revelation to humankind in the words of the original biblical manuscripts. The Bible is thus authoritative.

Second Peter 1:21 provides a key insight regarding the human-divine interchange in the process of inspiration. This verse informs us that "prophecy [or Scripture] never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (NIV). The phrase "carried along" literally means "forcefully borne along."

Even though human beings were used in the process of writing down God's Word, they were all literally "borne along" by the Holy Spirit. The human wills of the authors were not the originators of God's message. God did not permit the will of sinful human beings to misdirect or erroneously record His message. Rather, as Norman Geisler and William Nix put it, "God moved and the prophet mouthed these truths; God revealed and man recorded His word."

Important Scriptural Point...

Jesus rebuked some of the Pharisees thus: "Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men" (**Mark 7:8**). Likewise, in **Colossians 2:8** the apostle Paul warns: "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ" (emphasis added). Any tradition that conflicts with Scripture is to be rejected.

Many Catholics argue that the Roman Catholic church gave us the Bible, and hence it is authoritative over the Bible. This simply is not true. The canon of Scripture began to form in the very days the Bible was being written, before the Roman Catholic Church was even in existence. Luke's Gospel was recognized as Scripture within a few years of its writing (**1 Timothy 5:18** quotes **Luke 10:7** as Scripture). Paul's writings were also recognized as Scripture during his own day (**2 Peter 3:16; 1 Corinthians 14:37; 1 Thessalonians 2:13**). Besides, it is God who determines the canon; human beings merely discover the canon.

As F.F. Bruce put it, the New Testament canon was not demarcated by the arbitrary decree of a council: "When at last a Church Council—the Synod of Carthage in A.D. 397—listed the 27 books of the New Testament, it did not confer upon them any authority which they did not already possess, but simply recorded their previously established canonicity."

3. An explicit statement of sola scriptura in the Bible is not necessary.

A doctrine does not have to be taught explicitly in Scripture in order for that doctrine to be recognized as true. The doctrine of the Trinity is an example. Scripture does not come right out

and say, “God is a Trinity.” But the Bible does implicitly teach this doctrine by telling us that 1) there is one God (**Deuteronomy 6:4**), and 2) the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are distinct persons who are God (**Matthew 3:16,17; 28:19**). Likewise, although the doctrine of sola scriptura may not be explicitly taught in Scripture, it is implicitly taught.

The Lord Jesus, for example, used Scripture as His final court of appeal. Jesus affirmed that “Scripture cannot be broken” (**John 10:35**). To the devil, Jesus consistently responded, “It is written...” (**Matthew 4:4-10**). Jesus affirmed the Bible’s divine inspiration (**Matthew 22:43**), indestructibility (**Matthew 5:17- 18**), infallibility (**John 10:35**), final authority (**Matt. 4:4,7,10**), historicity (**Matthew 12:40; 24:37**), scientific accuracy (**Matthew 19:2-5**), and factual inerrancy (**John 17:17; Matthew 22:29**).

The Apostle Paul stated in **2 Timothy 3:15-17** that Scripture was completely sufficient for all we needed to know regarding the person of God and our salvation.

Ask...

- Would you please read **2 Timothy 3:15-17**?
- What did Paul tell Timothy he needed for salvation and in order to be fully equipped for every good work in serving God?
- Can you see why Catholic Church tradition isn’t needed or necessary?

4. All apostolic tradition on faith and practice is in the New Testament.

All of the apostolic traditions relating to faith and practice are recorded for us in the pages of the New Testament. This, of course, does not mean that every single thing Jesus or the apostles said is recorded in the New Testament (see **John 20:30; 21:25**). But virtually all of the apostolic teaching necessary for faith and practice that God wanted communicated to His people is found within the New Testament (as **2 Timothy 3:15-17** indicates).

A look at the biblical record makes it more than clear that God’s will was for His revelations to be written down and preserved for coming generations. “*Moses wrote down all the words of*

the LORD” (Exodus 24:4). Joshua too “wrote these words in the book of the law of God” (Joshua 24:26). Samuel “told the people the ordinances of the kingdom, and wrote them in the book and placed it before the LORD” (1 Samuel 10:25). The Lord instructed Isaiah, “Take for yourself a large tablet and write on it in ordinary letters...” (Isaiah 8:1). Isaiah was told, “Now go, write it on a tablet before them and inscribe it on a scroll, that it may serve in the time to come as a witness forever” (Isaiah 30:8). Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper has suggested four advantages of written revelation as opposed to oral tradition: 1) Written revelation is durable and not susceptible to errors of memory, and accidental corruptions are minimized; 2) it can be universally disseminated; 3) it has the attribute of fixedness and purity; and 4) it is given a finality and normativeness which other forms of communication cannot attain.

5. Rome’s claim that the Bible cannot be interpreted without tradition contains a fatal flaw.

The Roman Catholic Church often claims that the Bible cannot be interpreted rightly without tradition. The big problem with this claim is that once Rome [Vatican City] gives a definitive explanation of a Bible passage via tradition, Rome’s explanation must then be interpreted, and in many cases Rome’s explanations are more complicated than the Bible passage.

What this means is that Rome has just pushed the problem back one generation. Now, instead of needing help interpreting the Bible, we need help interpreting the tradition that is supposed to make the Bible clearer.

Protestants, of course, believe that the Bible is sufficiently clear. This is a doctrine called perspicuity. This does not mean that every single verse in the Bible is equally clear or easy to understand. Rather, it means that the main teachings of the Bible are quite clear. As the old saying goes, the main things are the plain things, and the plain things are the main things.

There is one other point that bears mentioning at this juncture. Church history reveals that there are clear contradictions in the many traditions of Rome. Abelard (A.D. 1079–1142) recognized hundreds of such contradictions. For example, some church fathers accepted the

immaculate conception of Mary, while others did not.²⁸ What this means is that tradition is not infallible, nor is it authoritative.

Ask...

- Did you know that there are many contradictions in Catholic tradition such as some of the early church fathers accepting the immaculate conception while others did not?
- Doesn't this mean that church tradition is not infallible?

6. Scripture sets parameters that we are not free to go beyond.

God in Scripture has set definite parameters for us that we are compelled to obey. The apostle Paul, for example, exhorted the Corinthians "not to exceed what is written" (**1 Corinthians 4:6**). In **Deuteronomy 4:2** we are commanded: "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."

Proverbs 30:5,6 instructs us: "Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words lest He reprove you, and you be proved a liar."

Revelation 22:18,19 likewise tells us, "I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book."

Ask...

- Hasn't Roman Catholic tradition violated these commands from Scripture?

7. Jesus promised to guide the apostles, not apostolic successors.

In the Upper Room discourse, Jesus gave some very important instructions to the apostles. Among other things, He said, “The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you”

(John 14:26)

Norman Geisler and Ralph MacKenzie rightly note the importance of “you” and “your” in this verse. Jesus told the apostles and them alone that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth. This is not a promise made in regard to any alleged apostolic successors passing on tradition from generation to generation. The Holy Spirit’s ministry was to remind the apostles of “all that I said to you.” The “all” covers everything. There is no need for tradition. (Geisler and MacKenzie, Roman Catholics and Evangelicals, p. 196)

Ask...

- Please read **John 14:26**.
- When Jesus refers to “you” and “your” He is clearly referring to the apostles alone and not apostolic successors. Doesn’t this mean that there are no apostolic successors?

Transition:

After having explored why the Bible alone is authoritative for faith and practice and not church tradition it’s important that we now explore whether the 66 books of the Bible alone are also sufficient as opposed to the books of the apocrypha. To put it another way, “Doe the apocryphal books belong in the Bible?”

Explore...

Do the Apocryphal Books Belong in the Bible?

The word canon comes from a Greek word that means “measuring stick.” Over time, the word came to be used metaphorically of books that were “measured” and thereby recognized as being God’s Word. When we talk about the “canon of Scripture” today, we are referring to all the biblical books that collectively constitute God’s Word.

Roman Catholics argue that the apocryphal books—seven books and four parts of books of doubtful authenticity and authority*—belong in the canon.

The Roman Catholic Church decided these apocryphal books belonged in the Bible sometime following the Protestant Reformation. In fact, the Catholic Council of Trent (A.D. 1545–1563) canonized these books some 1,500 years after they were written, largely as a result of the Protestant Reformation, under circumstances that are highly suspect.

Nonetheless, the Council of Trent went so far as to state: “If anyone...should not accept the said books as sacred and canonical, entire with all their parts...and if both knowingly and deliberately he should condemn the aforesaid tradition, let him be anathema.” Hence, those who reject the Apocrypha are considered accursed.

If this is true then the apocryphal books should be 100% accurate just like that of Scripture. Which begs the question, “Is the Apocrypha inspired by God as evidenced by 100% accuracy?” The short answer is “no”. Let’s explore just 5 of the many reasons the apocrypha does not belong in the Bible and is not from God...

1. The apocrypha does not claim to be inspired by God as the books of the Bible do.

Unlike the New Testament books, which claimed to be inspired (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21; 2 Peter 3:16), the apocryphal books never make that claim. Moreover, no apocryphal book was written by a true prophet or apostle of God. And no apocryphal book was confirmed by divine miracles—something that happened often among the prophets in the Old Testament and apostles in the New Testament (for example, see 1 Kings 18 and Hebrews 2:4). Further, no apocryphal book contains predictive prophecy, which would have served to confirm divine inspiration.

Ask...

- Why doesn't a single apocryphal book claim to be inspired by God?
- If the apocryphal books were inspired by God why is it that none of the writers of those books were confirmed by divine miracles like the writers of the Old and New Testament?
- If the apocryphal books were inspired by God why didn't any of them contain predictive prophecy like the Old and New Testament books?

In one key apocryphal book—2 Maccabees, from which Roman Catholics draw support for the doctrine of the Mass—the author concedes that it is an abridgement of another man's work and expresses concern as to whether a good job was done or not (see 2 Maccabees 2:23; 15:38). Such would not be the case had this book been truly inspired by God.

2. New Testament authors never quote the Apocrypha but do quote the Old Testament often.

is a fact that no New Testament writer quoted from any of the apocryphal books as holy Scripture or gave them the slightest authority as inspired books. Jesus and the disciples virtually ignored these books—something that would not have been the case if they had considered them to be inspired. By contrast, there are many quotations by Jesus and the apostles from the canonical books of the Old Testament. (A good example is the Gospel of Matthew, which contains approximately 130 Old Testament citations and allusions.)

Ask...

- What does it tell you when New Testament writers often quote the Old Testament but never the Apocrypha?

3. The earliest Jews of Palestine rejected the Apocrypha.

The Jews of Palestine, including the Jewish Council of Jamnia which met in A.D. 90, rejected the Apocrypha as Scripture. This is understandable in view of the fact that there were no Jewish prophets that lived during the 400-year period between the Old and New Testaments. In keeping with this, ancient Jewish historian Flavius Josephus excluded the Apocrypha. And Philo, a Jewish teacher who lived in the first century, quoted from virtually every Old Testament

canonical book, but never once quoted from the Apocrypha. H. E. Ryle comments as follows on Philo: "Philo makes no quotations from the Apocrypha; and he gives not the slightest ground for the supposition that the Jews of Alexandria, in his time, were disposed to accept any of the books of the Apocrypha in their Canon of Holy Scripture." (Rhodes, Ron. Reasoning from the Scriptures with Catholics (p. 36). Harvest House Publishers.)

4. There are historical errors in the Apocrypha.

Scholars have noted that, unlike the canonical Scriptures, which have proven to be historically accurate over and over again, the Apocrypha contains clear historical errors. John Ankerberg and John Weldon summarize a few of these: Tobit contains certain historical and geographical errors such as the assumption that Sennacherib was the son of Shalmaneser (1:15) instead of Sargon II, and that Nineveh was captured by Nebuchadnezzar and Ahasuerus (14:5) instead of by Nabopolassar and Cyaxares....Judith cannot possibly be historical because of the glaring errors it contains....[In 2 Maccabees] there are also numerous disarrangements and discrepancies in chronological, historical, and numerical matters in the book, reflecting ignorance or confusion.¹² Josh McDowell also notes: "Tobit was supposedly alive when Jeroboam staged his revolt in 931 B.C. and was still living at the time of the Assyrian captivity (722 B.C.), yet the Book of Tobit says he lived only 158 years (Tobit 1:3-5; 14:11)."¹³ The reason all this is significant is that historical and archaeological studies have always been the true friend of the canon of the Old and New Testaments, but they are clearly not the friend of apocryphal books. Indeed, historical and archaeological studies have provided solid verification for numerous customs, places, names, and events mentioned in the Bible. Nelson Glueck, a specialist in ancient literature, did an exhaustive study and concluded: "It can be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference."¹⁴ Not so for the Apocrypha. Of course, this does not mean the apocryphal books are worthless. They are valuable for historical purposes and cultural insights, but they are not inspired and certainly do not belong in the canon. They are clearly man-made documents. (Rhodes, Ron. Reasoning from the Scriptures with Catholics (pp. 36-37). Harvest House Publishers.)

Ask...

- Does God make mistakes?
- Since the apocryphal books contain many historical errors doesn't this mean that can't be from God?
- Since many Catholic doctrines and traditions stem from the Apocrypha doesn't this mean the Catholic Church isn't from God?

5. There are unbiblical doctrines contained in the Apocrypha.

The Apocrypha contains a number of unbiblical doctrines, such as the doctrine of the Mass (2 Maccabees 12:42-45; compare with **Hebrews 7:27**), the notion that the world was created out of preexistent matter (Wisdom of Solomon; compare with **Genesis 1 and Psalm 33:9**), the idea that giving alms and other works can make an atonement for sin (Ecclesiasticus [Sirach] 3:3; 3:30; 5:5; 20:28; 35:1-4; 45:16; 45:23; compare with **Romans 3:20**), the invocation and intercession of the saints (2 Maccabees 15:14; Baruch 3:4; compare with **Matthew 6:9**), the worship of angels (Tobit 12:12; compare with **Colossians 2:18**), purgatory and the redemption of souls after death (2 Maccabees 12:42,45; compare with **Hebrews 9:27**). Because we know the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, and because the apocryphal books contain doctrines that contradict the Old and New Testaments, we conclude that the apocryphal books are not the Word of God because, quite simply, God does not contradict Himself. If God inspired the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Apocrypha, all three would have to agree with each other. But they do not. The Apocrypha is not inspired. (Rhodes, Ron. Reasoning from the Scriptures with Catholics (p. 38). Harvest House Publishers.)

Ask...

- Since the Apocrypha clearly contradicts the Old and New Testament in many important biblical doctrines, what are we to conclude about the Apocrypha?

Conclusion:

Obviously, the Apocrypha has serious problems. From magic to salvation by works, to money as an offering for the sins of the dead, and blatant incorrect historical facts – it is full of false and unbiblical teachings. It isn't inspired by God. Likewise, neither is the Roman Catholic Church, which has stated the Apocrypha is inspired. This shows the Roman Catholic Church is not the means by which God is communicating his truth to his people, that the Magisterium has erred greatly, and that it is infested with man's false tradition rather than God's absolute truth. (<https://carm.org/roman-catholicism/errors-in-the-apocrypha/>)