**Is Catholicism Different Than Biblical Christianity?
*Six Traditional Beliefs Not Found In Scripture***

**By Mike Shreve**

I was raised Roman Catholic, baptized as an infant, attended parochial school, received the sacraments, and served as an altar boy. I have only good memories. The nuns who taught me, and the priests I served under, were people of real character. I am still awed by the sacrificial commitment they made to serve others. My foundational beliefs about Jesus—His virgin birth, sinless life, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension—all came through their influence, and for that I am grateful.

Unfortunately, as I entered my teens, I turned away from religion. The wake-up call came at the age of 18 after a near-death experience. Thankfully, the negative became a positive because it inclined my heart toward things possessing eternal value. I dropped out of college to find God. My next stop was eastern religions (see the chapter on “What’s Wrong with Yoga?” for details). A year later, the door to true salvation opened when I received a letter from a former college friend who insisted:

“Mike, you’ll never find God through the practice of yoga. Jesus is ‘the way’ and ‘no one comes to the Father’ but by Him (John 14:6). You must be ‘born again’ to enter God’s kingdom (John 3:1-5). Receive Jesus into your heart and ask Him to be your Savior.”

His letter intrigued me, so I prayed that if Jesus was real, He would reveal Himself. It happened, in a miraculous series of events. Soon after, I began studying the Bible intensely and discovered many doctrines I had embraced as a Catholic could not be found in Scripture. The following are some of the most important:

1. **Infant Baptism**—Biblically, no one was ever sprinkled as a form of baptism; immersion is always the method. Also, infant baptism is nowhere to be found. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached, “Repent . . . and be baptized” (Acts 2:38). When the Ethiopian eunuch asked to be baptized, Philip responded, “If you believe with all your heart, you may” (Acts 8:37). A baby has no ability to repent or believe.

Catholicism teaches that five things happen during baptism: the sprinkled child is born again, becomes a member of the church, is indwelt by God’s Spirit, receives the gift of eternal life, and original sin is canceled. None of those things are true. Infant baptism is merely a religious ceremony.

1. **Priesthood**—Scripture indicates all of God’s people are “a holy priesthood” and “a royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:5,9). A “priest” is one who has access into God’s presence. Jesus purchased that privilege for all who love Him (see Hebrews 10:19). We do not need a ‘go-between,” for “there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5).
2. **Confession**—The Bible suggests we confess our sins to each other, but never requires that we confess them to a priest (see James 5:16). Anyone can go to God directly. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).
3. **Praying to the Saints**— The first time the Catholic Church canonized a saint was in 993 A.D., a tradition never practiced prior to that. Catholics believe in praying to the saints, but Scripture teaches that attempting to contact the dead is an “abomination” (Deuteronomy 18:9-10). All true Christians are “saints” biblically, not just those who enter heaven (see Colossians 1:2). Praying to saints is logistically impossible. There are 1.3 billion Catholics globally. If just ten percent (130 million) prayed to Peter in one day, every minute, over 90,000 people would be talking to him. Successfully responding would require omniscience and omnipresence, attributes only God has.
4. **The Virgin Mary**—The mother of Jesus is not a “perpetual virgin” as taught in Catholicism. Matthew 1:25 explains that Joseph “did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son”—a biblical expression meaning sexual union. So, he *did* have relations with her afterward, for Jesus had siblings. Biblical proof abounds (see Matthew 12:47).
5. **Purgatory**— The Bible only talks about two destinations after death: heaven or hell. No amount of penance or Purgatorial suffering could ever enable us to earn eternal life. We are saved by grace and by believing in the crucifixion and resurrection of the Son of God. Salvation is a “gift” (Ephesians 2:8-9). The primary scripture Catholics use to try and prove an intermediate location is 1 Corinthians 3:11-15:

*No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved,* *yet so as through fire.*

This passage is not directed toward unsaved people, but those who declare Jesus to be their “foundation.” This is not describing a fiery suffering lasting thousands of years, but a single “Day.” It’s the glorious “Day” of the Second Coming, when “the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire.” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8). That fire will instantly reveal the true value of all religious works done in the name of Christianity by those who love Him. Those not done in accordance with His will and His Word will, in a sense, be burned up and will not procure an eternal reward.

**Conclusion**—This is just a sampling of many Catholic doctrines that are false. Furthermore, the true church is not an organization; it is an organism, a living body of believers, comprised of all who have been born again by inviting Jesus into their hearts to be Lord of their lives.

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