

Jason Upchurch - The Cult of Catholicism

Several weeks ago Pope Francis died and that unleashed a wave of theological confusion I haven't seen in some time. Well, to be honest I haven't seen it since Pope Benedict stepped down and prior to that Pope John Paul II dying.

Usually when a Pope dies there's this weird worldwide fascination about the Catholic Church, even among Protestants. Is it black smoke or white smoke and many people wait with high anticipation about who it's going to be. It's like the NFL draft; except the draft is for heretics and there's only one person drafted.

What I want to show you this morning is that the Roman Catholic Church is an utterly heretical Church. And I mean that in the most serious way.

WCF: Denies that the Pope has any authority over the church. Even goes so far as to say he exalts himself against Christ and all that is called God.

1689 London Confession, 26:4: "The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the church, in whom, by the appointment of the Father, all power for the calling, institution, order or government of the church, is invested in a supreme and sovereign manner; neither can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof, but is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalts himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God; whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of his coming."

I believe that as well. And you should too.

But we see a lot of confusion even among evangelicals over the Pope and the Catholic Church. There's really 2 points of confusion that I see regularly. First, what happens when an unbeliever dies? The Pope was an unbeliever, he rejected the gospel and there is zero evidence of any last minute conversion.

The reality is that when an unbeliever dies they are cast into hell immediately. We see this clearly in 3 passages.

Heb. 9:27: It is appointed for a man to die once then comes what? Judgement. We die and then there's a judgment. A separating into heaven and hell until we face the Lord in final Judgement at the resurrection.

2 Peter 2:9: The Lord knows how to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgement, especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.

When the unrighteous die, they are punished in hell as they await the final judgment at the resurrection. That's when all their deeds will be examined and they are cast into the lake of fire.

Luke 16:19-31 we have the story of the rich man and Lazarus. And we're given a window into their existence immediately after they both die. Lazarus is said to be in Paradise. The rich man is in anguish in the flame, in the place of torment and would love just a small drop of water to cool his tongue.

But a lot of people - even self-proclaimed Christians - will say things like "Rest in peace" or "they're in a better place" or "at least they're not suffering" when they're talking about people they know weren't believers.

You guys, the reason we preach the gospel is because they're not resting in peace when they die. They're not in a better place. They are suffering more now than they ever did in this life as the good and just retribution for their sins. We should suffer in the same way when we die, the only reason we won't is because of God's amazing grace through Jesus.

But they're in torment. I don't think we need to say that at the funeral home to the family that's grieving. There's a proper time and place for those conversations. But we certainly don't need to mislead anyone.

And so when the Pope died and many people claiming to be Christians said those kinds of things they were distorting the truth. A misrepresentation of the gospel. We don't need to lie to people to comfort them.

The second thing that happened, and I want to spend our time talking about today, is that many Christians are confused about the Roman Church. They don't know what they believe, they don't know what their view on our beliefs are. Many people look at Rome as just an odd denomination of Christianity, which couldn't be further from the truth.

And just fair warning: What I want to do this morning is show you 4 ways the Roman Catholic Church is heretical. When we say heretical I mean they are outside of the Christian faith.

I don't usually spend a lot of time on what other false religions believe, but it is important to stop from time to time and examine them to show how they are false.

JC Ryle: He that is not zealous against error, is not likely to be zealous for the truth.

It is critical as Christians that we know not the truths that will save us, but the lies that will damn us as well.

Imagine you're dying of a deadly bacterial infection and the nurse hands you some pills and says take this and you'll be okay. And it turns out she got the bottle mixed up: she gave you placebos instead of the real medicine. It's the same color, same size - but it's not the true medicine. And you didn't realize it until it was too late. You'd die thinking you were going to be fine.

That's what the Roman church is doing with the gospel. They are offering a gospel placebo that won't save a soul.

Big Picture: The Roman Catholic Church is a false religion and the Pope is an AntiChrist.

Let me give one small caveat, then we'll dive in: Are there some Roman Catholics who are truly saved? It's possible. But they would be saved in spite of the teaching of the church not because of it. And why would they stay in a false church if they were true believers? If you were saved out of Buddhism, why would you still go to the Buddhist temple? If you're saved out of Mormonism, why would you still go to the Ward? Same thing with Rome.

Okay, how do we know the Roman Church is a false religion? We could identify many, many things where are wrong. But I want to stick to the most important issues. And I also want them to speak for themselves so what we're going to use their own official church teachings to help us.

1. Rome denies salvation comes by faith alone. Last week we saw this passage where Paul makes it clear that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone. Salvation is all by faith - without regard to any works at all on our part.

Gal 3:14: The blessing of Abraham - salvation/justification - might come to the Gentiles so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

Rome denies that salvation comes through faith alone.

Let me read to you from the Council of Trent. The Council of Trent is Roman document created in 1545-1563 that gives affirmations and denials of the Roman faith. And in Council of Trent they also proclaim anathema to those who reject these things. Anathema means you are damned because you are outside of the church.

These are the official teachings of the Church and they were targeting both Luther and Calvin who were leading the reformation.

Session 6, Canon 9: "If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone - meaning nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification and that it is not in any way necessary the he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will - let him be anathema.

Two things here. First, this is a simple, flat rejection of salvation by grace through faith alone. Last week we saw that is the means of salvation. **Read 8-9**

This is what Paul argues in **Rom. 4:3**: Abraham believed God - that's all he did - and it was counted to him as righteousness. Paul goes on to say righteousness from God depends on faith.

The official teaching of the Roman church is that salvation is not by faith alone. You have to add your cooperation, your preparation, your work to salvation.

We reject that. Because if we are adding our works then salvation is a wage, not a gift.

Second thing to notice in that statement is that they proclaim anathema on anyone who believes what we believe. This is an important point: it's not just that **we** believe the Roman church is not saved. It's a two-way street. They believe we're going to hell as well.

And it can only be one way, you guys. Either salvation is all of grace all through faith - or there's something we add. Only 2 options.

There's a lot of well meaning Christians who say "Well, I don't want to judge anyone, that's unkind." To which I would say you have to be able to judge whether someone's beliefs are correct or not. We are called to be discerning. We are called to test the spirits, test the teachings of others. You are called to test my teaching and the teaching of the elders here to see whether it's in line with the Word of God.

That's immune system of the church. The church - meaning all believers - is the pillar and buttress of truth **1 Tim 3:15**

So which one is right? Which one holds to the Word of God? You guys, there's nothing we could possibly add to our salvation because we were dead. Every part of salvation was God's gracious doing.

What the reformers did in the 1500s wasn't invent new doctrine. They're called reformers because they were trying to reform the church to what she once was: doctrinally pure and committed to the truth.

Listen, the if the Catholic Church got everything else completely right in their theology. If they could sign off on every other doctrine that we hold dear and were missing at just this one point: it would sink the ship of salvation.

Because the only alternative to salvation by grace through faith alone, is salvation by works.

2) Rome keeps killing Jesus Christ. This might sound weird, but it's incredibly important.

The most critical part of the Roman church gathering is the Mass. And in the Mass the Roman church believes that it crucifies Jesus over and over every Sunday in every church throughout the whole world, throughout all the ages.

Side: I call it the Roman Church because it's based out of Rome. I try to not use the phrase "Catholic Church" because we believe in the Catholic Church. Catholic just means universal. So we believe that everyone all over the world, all through the ages who has believed in Jesus is part of the Church, the lower-case c catholic Church.

What we reject is the Roman Catholic Church. And the Roman church is most noted for the sacrifice of the mass. When Roman Catholics take the Lord's Supper, it's not just a memorial. And it's not just that we're arguing over really big words like consubstantiation and transubstantiation and spiritual presence and on and on.

They believe that the elements - wine and bread - turn into the literal body and blood of Jesus and that what is happening every Sunday is a new sacrifice of Jesus. An "unbloody sacrifice," but a sacrifice.

22nd Session, Canon 1: “If anyone says that in the mass a true and proper sacrifice is not offered to God...let him be anathema.

What we call the Lord’s Supper they call a sacrifice. Jesus is slain over and over and over. And if you deny that, you are anathema.

Now, someone might say “Well, when they say sacrifice, it’s just a sacrifice of praise. They don’t mean a real sacrifice.” Oh yes they do.

22nd Session, Canon 3: [Just to be clear, they mean propitiation]: If anyone says that the sacrifice of mass is only a sacrifice of praise or thanksgiving. Or that it is just a commemoration of the cross but not a propitiatory sacrifice...or [get this] that it ought not be offered for the living and the dead...let him be anathema.

They believe true propitiation is happening and that it’s happening for the living and the dead - every Sunday all over the world. That’s why the elements have to turn into Jesus: in order to be a sacrifice.

So if a Catholic holding to their own doctrine were to visit us here, there’s a reason they would never take our Lord’s Supper: because we reject that what we are doing is a sacrifice. We remember Jesus. He is here spiritually present with us. But there’s no sacrifice. Because we deny that, they view us as damned.

Now, turnabout is fair play. If you ever find yourself in a Catholic service for whatever reason - you should never ever take what they call the Lord’s Supper. Why? Because you would be affirming their doctrine. They probably wouldn’t let you take it anyway.

But to be really really clear: what they are doing at the Lord’s Supper is demonic and rejection of the gospel of Jesus. Plain and simple. **Turn to Hebrews 10:1-14**

Here in Hebrews the author is telling us the contrast between the millions of sacrifices in the OT - which never actually accomplished anything - and the one sacrifice of Jesus. The Law prepared us to understand what substitutionary sacrifice was about: one perfect, being slaughtered for an imperfect thing. You put your sinful hand on a pure white sheep and it takes your sin. But it was always just a picture. **Read 1-7**

So here’s the big reveal: all those sacrifices in the OT never actually took away sin. They couldn’t; a cow can’t die for a human. And even if it could it never worked because they had to offer them over and over. If it actually worked they’d just do it once.

So why do it? Because God commanded it and those that offered these sacrifices in faith believed God and Jesus’s future perfect life and atoning sacrifice was counted to them as righteousness.

They sacrificed in faith for a future event, just as we believe in Jesus as a past event. Both were saved by faith in the one and only sacrifice of Jesus. **Read 8-10**

Here the author says, when Jesus came in it was a transition. No more OT sacrifices because we have been sanctified through the offering of Jesus. Once for all.

That phrase once-for-all is the idea that it’s done for all time. It’s like when I go to the garage and it’s a wreck and I’m like “I’m going to clean this place once for all. What do I mean? I mean I’m going to give it a thorough cleaning so I don’t ever have to clean it again.

Jesus’s sacrifice is once for all meaning there is no more sacrifice to give. It’s all done. And just to make the point. **Read 11-14**

You guys, the absolute wonder of Jesus is that in one sacrifice one Friday 2,000 years ago, sacrifices were put to an end. It was over. For all time for billions of people. That one death perfectly propitiated the wrath of God for the sins of all his people in every age.

That's the massive contrast here: repeatedly/single. Repeatedly/ single. Repeatedly/single.

So to say that the sacrifice of the mass - which is what they call it - to say that it is a sacrifice rejects the clear biblical teaching.

But it also means that Jesus's death on the cross didn't actually accomplish anything. If Jesus has to be sacrificed over and over, his crucifixion didn't do anything. It was no more powerful than the death of bulls and goats that never take away sin.

The Roman Catholic Supper - which they call the sacrifice of the mass - completely destroys the work of Jesus on the cross.

And if you just follow out the logic, they're denying that the sacrifice of their own mass is even effective. If they have to keep offering it it makes it clear it's not actually doing anything. It's no better than the OT sacrifices that never took away sin.

John Calvin said of all the blasphemous abominations of Rome, the biggest is the sacrifice of the mass. It is an intolerable insult both to the sacrifice and passion of Jesus Christ...accursed idolatry (Institutes Book 4, Chap 18, Section 1)

So Rome denies that salvation is by grace through faith alone.
And Rome denies that Jesus's sacrifice was once for all.

3) Rome believes in baptismal regeneration.

What is baptismal regeneration? Baptismal regeneration is the false belief that baptism saves someone.

So we believe that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone. Faith is the instrument of God's saving grace. Remember the hose analogy? We put out a fire by water through a hose. We believe that salvation is by grace through faith.

Rome denies that, as we saw earlier, but Rome believes that salvation is by grace through baptism. Baptism is the chief instrument of grace in the Roman church.

Session 7, Canon 5: If anyone says that baptism is free, that is, not necessary unto salvation, let him be anathema.

In their doctrine baptism washes away original sin. It's a true spiritual cleansing that takes place. Now, we know there are passages that seem awfully close to sounding like baptism is necessary for salvation.

When the Jews on Pentecost ask what they must do as a result of his sermon he says repent and be what? Baptized. Isn't that baptismal regeneration? No. Because why did they ask what they needed to do? Because they already believed.

What about others who are told to be baptized to have their sins washed away? Well, that's what baptism is a picture of: washing sin away, as well as a uniting with Jesus in his death and resurrection.

We really need to look no further than the thief on the cross to understand that one doesn't need to be baptized to be justified. Justification is by grace alone through faith alone.

Is baptism important? Of course! If you're a Christian and haven't been baptized you need to be baptized. Jesus commands you to be baptized. He commands that you follow him in obedience because it is the sign that you are part of the New Covenant.

I'm coaching little league this year and it would be really weird if one of my players refused to wear his jersey for the games. Aren't you a Mariner? Yes! Then put your jersey on. If you refuse to put the jersey on then are

you really on the team? It's the way I know you're on the team, the way our opponents know you're on the team and the way that the team accepts you.

Baptism is the same. It's not the way you get on the team, but it is the sign that you're on our team. This is the way we know you're on the team, the way you tell us you're on the team, and the way unbelievers know you've switched teams through faith in Jesus.

Rome rejects that. They say baptism isn't just a sign - it's the way you get on the team. This is their official position. They hold to unbiblical positions and anathematize those who reject it.

Let's talk about one more.

There's many more we could talk about. We could talk about the worship of Mary. Many Catholics hold that Mary is a co-redemptrix with Jesus. That she is sinless and the holy mother to whom we not only pray but also worship as taking part in our salvation.

That couldn't be further from the truth. Mary does have an honored place in all of history as the mother of our Lord. Through the Holy Spirit she knew she was blessed above women because of the role God appointed for her. But she was a sinner saved by the grace of Jesus like the rest of us. She was sinful and fallible and a child of wrath before she was saved by God through faith in her own Son as the risen Lord.

We could talk about problems with the priesthood. We could talk about the problems with the Roman view that there are 7 sacraments - baptism, the Supper, extreme unction, confession, so on. And if you deny that those are sacraments you're anathema.

But I started this because of concern for the new Pope - let talk about their view of the Pope.

4) They believe the Pope is Vicar of Christ on Earth.

This is why the Pope is an antichrist. Vicar is where we get our word for vicarious. Meaning he is the stand in, the representative, the substitute for Christ on earth. The Roman church believes that when you look at the Pope, that's essentially looking at Jesus's chief representative.

And that when the Pope speaks ex Cathedra - from the Cathedral - he is in fact the mouthpiece of God. When he speaks ex Cathedra he is speaking the words of God. New revelation binding for all people.

You guys, that's crazy town. The only way you can know that someone is speaking the words of God is if they are reading the Bible out loud.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church - paragraph 882 says that the "Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity of both of the and of the whole company of the faithful. For this reason he is the Vicar of Christ, the head of the College of Bishops and pastor of the universal church.

1870 - Vatican I - "We teach and declare that, by the appointment of the Lord, the Roman Church possesses a superiority of ordinary power over all other churches."

Council of Florence 1439 - Bull Laetentur Caeli - The Roman Pontiff is the true Vicar of Christ, the head of the whole church.

He is the chief. He is the stand in for Jesus. Which is why when there's a new Pope there's so much drama. Because they're asking "Who is the new Jesus we're getting?"

That's what's happening. Is he going to be liberal or conservative? Benedict was more traditional, Francis was a liberal, it seems Leo is as well. Maybe they picked this guy to reinvigorate the American Catholic Church. We should the serious question: who cares?

You guys, this is like asking if the new Mohammed is liberal or conservative. Is the new Jospeh Smith from South America or Africa? Is the new Buddha just a temporary fix or is he the long term visionary?

It doesn't matter because he's anti Christ.

There's a reason the 1689 London Confession and the Westminster confession identify the Pope an AntiChrist. He is the chief counterfeit of Jesus in the world. He holds sway over hundreds of millions of people who think he speaks for God when he doesn't. Where do they get that idea.

Do you know who the real vicar of Christ is in the world? Who the real representation of Jesus is in this age? It's the Holy Spirit. Jesus says in John I'm going away and I'm sending you a Helper, a Comforter. The Holy Spirit who comes in the place of Jesus.

Turn to Jude. I like the introduction of Jude because it does many things. First it shows Jude's humility. **Read 1-2**

Who is Jude? He's Jesus's half brother. If ever there was someone who could claim to be the vicar of Christ on earth it would Jude. He's related to Jesus. He's an apostle. What does he call himself? A servant - a slave. He's not high and mighty. He's humble and unassuming.

But he also calls us to something very important. **Read 3-4**

He had intended to write a longer letter. But there was something that needed to be said about false teachers. This whole letter is a warning about false teachers. And he says - this was too important to not talk about. People came in under the guise of Jesus, the guise of brothers - but they're not brothers. Roman Catholics are not brothers. They deny our only Master and Lord Jesus.

What's the command that Jude gives here? There's only 1 command and it's in Verse 3. **Read 3**

Contend. Fight. For the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

Our faith in Jesus Christ the Lord who saves us by faith in his once for all sacrifice is worth fighting for. We have to know the truth, defend the truth, and stand for it. So help us, God.

Pray