

## What is Romanism?

Living in the Northeast, one of the most frequent religious questions we receive is “what is the difference between Protestant Christianity and Roman Catholicism?”

First, all true Christians are part of the “catholic” church. The word “catholic” means “universal.” All believers from every generation, location, and local assembly are part of the spiritual body of Christ.

### ***Ephesians 4:3-6***

*"Being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."*

However, not every Christian follows “Roman” Catholicism. In the Middle Ages the church at Rome created its own distinct denomination with its own systems of theology. This denomination dominated Europe until Christians began to examine the teachings of the Bible which brought about the Reformation in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century.

Any Christian would have felt comfortable attending the Church of Rome from the first to the fourth century. But the apostasy, which invaded the church in the Middle Ages, requires faithful Christians to follow the teaching of the Apostle John and stand apart from Romanism.

### ***2 John 7-11***

*7 - For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.*

*8 - Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.*

*9 - Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.*

*10 - If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting;*

*11 - for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.*

Part of the confusion is the definition of the church. The church was never meant to be an earthly organization with headquarters in a particular city and a CEO at the top (See Luke 17:20-21). The church is a spiritual organization that transcends human denominations. Christ is the head of the church, and heaven is the capitol. Everyone who confesses Christ as Lord is in that church, and the unity and fellowship among believers is not bound to a local church in Rome.

The crux of the matter is the theology of Romanism compared to the theology of New Testament Christianity.

Roman Catholicism teaches a Gospel that is different from the Gospel of Scriptures. The “Gospel” according to Romanism is that you must make expiation for your own sin. This is much different

from the New Testament which teaches that Christ paid the price for all our sin and salvation comes by receiving Christ as Lord and Savior (Romans 8:1-4).

In Romanism, Christ's work on the cross takes away only the original sin imputed to you by Adam. When you are baptized as a Roman Catholic, only your original sin is washed away. You are then a member of the Roman Catholic Church. For all other sins you commit, you must personally make payment (expiation) for them by good works. To do this you must continually partake of the Mass. The Mass is the continual sacrifice of Christ on the altars of the Roman Church. Also, through prayers to the saints, the saints can credit to you their extra righteousness. Good works will also atone for your sin. If at the end of life the Roman Catholic has not made sufficient expiation for sin, he must suffer in purgatory until he has paid off the remaining penalty.

The disagreement Evangelical Christianity has with the Romanist system is that in Romanism one must save himself by human merit. Now does salvation by human merit sound like the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ? Historically, Christians have believed that the Good News (The Gospel) is that Jesus Christ saves us completely when we put our faith in Him.

***Acts 13:39***

*“And through Christ everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.”*

The main question is what should a Roman Catholic do? Is the Romanist deviation in the theology of salvation just a little mistake, or is it serious enough to justify removing oneself from the Romanist denomination?

The Scriptures indicate that distorting the Gospel is very serious! Any system that derives salvation from human merit is contrary to the Gospel. It negates the complete work of Christ on the cross and undermines God's salvation by grace alone. One cannot be saved by trying to establish his own righteousness (See Luke 18:10-14; Romans 10:3-4; Romans 3:20). At the very least, the Apostle John wrote that believers who support false teachers will lose their full reward (See 2 John 1:8). And this reward most likely refers to rewards on earth and in heaven.

***Galatians 1:6-10***

*6 - I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;*

*7 - which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.*

*8 - But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!*

*9 - As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!*

*10 - For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.*

Undoubtedly, in the Roman Catholic system there are some truly born again believers who are trusting in Christ alone for salvation. Nevertheless, many stay in the Romanist system because they are either unaware of the theology or they are maintaining traditions or family ties. We pray that any

believer in the Romanist system will evaluate his allegiances in the light of the Bible.

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