

## **What is the difference between Catholics and Protestants?**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JhBR-JH5vJw>**

**Transcript: <https://dontveter.com/ec/cat.vs.prot.pdf>**

The Roman Catholic Church has developed some distinctive doctrines over the centuries.

Many times, the church was content to allow a variety of opinions, but over time, the church declared certain specific doctrines to be necessary to be believed and perhaps the most important doctrine is the doctrine of authority, the authority of the Bishop of Rome.

Boniface VIII, in 1302, taught, officially and formally, that it is absolutely necessary to be in subjection to the Bishop of Rome in order to be saved.

The Fifth Lateran Council of 1516 reiterated that teaching in almost the same words and so one of the most important differences in doctrine between Catholics and Protestants is authority.

In Roman Catholicism, it is the authority of The Pope and your submission to that authority, which is necessary for your salvation.

In Protestantism, our authority is the Scriptures.

God has spoken through the Word of God and when we hear the Scriptures, we hear the voice of God and so we submit to everything that God has revealed in the Scriptures.

And this was the initial, central dividing line between Protestants and Catholics and it remains an abiding source of fundamental difference.

Other doctrines that have separated Catholics from Protestants center around salvation itself.

In Roman Catholicism, salvation comes principally through the sacraments of the church.

According to Roman Catholic doctrine, an infant needs to be baptized in order to be saved, but in that baptism, administered by the church, the infant is born again and is justified, forgiven of all sins.

But that does not mean the infant is saved because justification is merely the beginning of salvation and it does not wipe away all debt, but only wipe away the spiritual debt of the sins committed up to that point.

In order to have all of your debts wiped away, for your temporal guilt and for your subsequent sins, you have to apply yourself to good works and, principally, to the other sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church and, in this way, always working, always adding your own merit to the merits of Christ in order that you may be saved.

Now I should say, in all fairness, Roman Catholic theologians will say this whole system is a system of grace, so they will not acknowledge that it's a system of works in any fundamental way, even though works are a part of how you receive the grace and a part of the system of grace.

But, Protestants have held, quite differently, that salvation is all of grace, that there is nothing that we can do, in any way, to attract God's grace and mercy, nothing we can do to add to it, it is all of grace and so when God saves us, through repentance and faith in Christ Jesus, this is His doing and it is through faith, alone.

The good works that we do are the response to God's mercy, they are the fruit of the salvation that He has wrought in us through faith and through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

They in no way contribute to our justification and our salvation, so this doctrine of salvation is the second enduring thing that has separated, and still separates, Roman Catholics and Protestants.

Now related to these two fundamental differences, the fundamental difference with regard to authority and the fundamental difference with regard to salvation, are a number of other differences and one of those is the doctrine of purgatory.

In Protestantism, there is no purgatory, we do not believe that the Scriptures teach this and, fundamentally, because all of our sins are forgiven us, through faith in Christ.

Christ's work of satisfaction, of reconciliation, of redemption is a complete work and there's no debt to sin left to be paid.

In Roman Catholicism, the official teaching is that, even when we exercise faith, even when we are faithful Christians, we still have a debt that must be paid to sin and that debt will be paid after death in purgatory, in which believers will spend thousands, or hundreds of thousands or, possibly, even millions of years in a purgatorial suffering, a suffering that purges you of your evil and infuses righteousness into you until you are fully righteous and then able to be received into heaven.

Another important difference between Roman Catholics and Protestants has to do with prayer.

Protestants believe that prayer may be offered to God alone and to pray to anyone else, to any other creature, and to ask for the things that God himself has pledged to give is a form of idolatry.

Roman Catholics have taught, through the centuries, that prayer may be offered, appropriately and reverently, to the Saints and to Mary, herself, and so Roman Catholic piety, in many cases, has been characterized by prayer to the Saints and prayer to Mary.

Now another difference between Protestants and Roman Catholics has to do with the doctrine of the church and, in particular, the unity of the church.

Roman Catholics have declared that there is only one church and that there is no salvation in any other place but in the church that is under the Bishop of Rome.

Protestants have held that we are justified by faith in Christ, irrespective of who is the pastor or the bishop or the denomination of the church. What is fundamental is not, "Are you in communion with the Bishop of Rome?"

What is fundamental is, "Have you repented of your sins and trusted in Christ Jesus?"

And, so, Protestants hold that our hope does not reside in any man, in any organization, in any church.

Our hope resides in the shed blood of Christ Jesus for sinners, such that anyone who believes in Him may be saved and this is the foundation of the true church of Jesus Christ.