

Bible Special 06-08-01a

This is Tuesday the 1st of August, 2006. We continue tonight our study in the Christian faith, why we believe the Bible, what are the characteristics of world religions who purport to offer an alternative to faith in God. Let's take a moment as we begin to clear our minds and focus our concentration and prepare our hearts for the ministry of God's Holy Spirit.

Shall we pray? Father, we are so grateful for the revealed truth that is found in your Word, the revealed truth that is in our hearts because of the ministry of your Spirit. We pray that as we examine those who purport to have the truth and to offer the way to you that we will see the distinctives, see the realities that are a part of our Christian faith based on your Word and that in so doing we will be wise in this world, we will not be taken in, we will not be deceived, and we will understand and be ready to give an answer to every man who asks us a reason for the hope that is in us. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Tonight we take a look, we have begun by looking at world religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism and Islam and that sort of thing. We came a little bit closer to home by looking at some of the cults that purport to be Christian such as Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Latter Day Saints, and now we turn our attention to those that are closest to us perhaps and yet in some ways still very far away from Biblical truth.

So tonight we are going to look at the Roman Catholic Church. Some of you here have firsthand experience with the Roman Catholic Church having come out of it and you will recognize in our discussion and in our study some of the features of this because the Roman Catholic Church claims to be God's church, claims to be God's representative on earth, claims to have a direct link to Jesus Christ through the Apostles, specifically the Apostle Peter, and is the home, the persuasion of choice for millions upon millions, hundreds of millions of people around the world. So why are we not Catholics? Why do we not subscribe to Roman Catholicism? Why do we fall under what is broadly known as the Protestant variety of Christianity? This by its very name is defined in terms of the Catholic Church because we are those who protest or who follow in the footsteps of those who first protested against the Catholic Church.

Well, the first thing we need to look at is how did the Catholic Church come into being and what are its characteristics? Because of course the Church began with Jesus and his Apostles, right? Jesus asked his disciples, who do men say that I am? Some say you're John the Baptist, some say you're Elijah or another one of the prophets. Then Jesus said, who do you say that I am? And Peter replied by saying, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And when he said that, this was a great confession of faith.

What is orthodoxy? The first tenet of it relates to the person and work of Jesus Christ. He is both God and man. And when Peter said, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Christ, the anointed one, was known to be a man, the Son of David.

And the Son of the living God is an attestation of Jesus' deity. And so Peter, when he replies to Jesus' question and says, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God, he makes two distinct statements. He says, you are the anointed one, you are the Mashiach, you are the Son of David promised to us in the Old Testament Scriptures, and you are the Son of God.

You are human, you are divine. And this is a great insight on Peter's part. And Jesus says, blessed are you, Peter, because you didn't come up with this on your own.

My Father has revealed this to you. Now, it doesn't mean that Peter was just bumbling along, smelling the daisies and picking the wheat, and God suddenly whacked him in the head and said, hey, Jesus is the Christ and he's the Son of God. Why did the Father reveal this truth to Peter? Well, you think about our memory verses in Psalm 1 or in Proverbs 2. If you ask and if you seek and if you knock, if you search for wisdom and knowledge as though it was hidden treasure, that's when Solomon says, you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.

Peter found the knowledge of God, knowledge from God. How did he find it? Because he was seeking it and searching for it and made it a point. He abandoned his fishing business to follow Jesus and find that truth.

And that's why it was revealed to him, as it was to John and to James and to Andrew and those most dedicated of the disciples were the ones who figured these things out. It was revealed to them by God. So, this by the way is in Matthew chapter 16, if you want the passage, where they're in Caesarea Philippi.

This is northwest of the Sea of Galilee, up in the wilderness a little bit. And this text is the basis for the Catholic Church, believe it or not. Because when Peter says, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus says, I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. Whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

This is verse 18 and 19 of Matthew chapter 16. So, what happened? Today, if you ask the Catholics, well, why do you have a Pope? They'll say, well, our current Pope followed the previous Pope, who followed the previous Pope, who followed each of the previous Popes, all the way back to Peter, who was the first Pope. And each of the Popes has handed the keys of the kingdom and this authority that Jesus gave to Peter on to his successors, so to speak.

Well, we want to look at that claim because our standard is the Word of God. Remember the third point of orthodoxy, the inerrancy and infallibility of the Scriptures? It is our reliable revelation of God's truth. So, are they correct when they go to Matthew chapter 16, verses 18 and 19 and find Jesus' words, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, I will give you the keys of the kingdom, whatever you bind will be bound, whatever you loose on earth will

be loosed in heaven, and so on.

The view taken by the Catholic Church, historically, over the last many centuries, is that the Christian church is built on Peter. Because Jesus said, you're the rock I'm going to build my church on. That's number one.

The church is built on Peter. Secondly, Peter was the first bishop of the church in Rome. And this is sort of the first pope status.

And then thirdly, that Peter was able to pass this on to subsequent bishops of Rome. Now, interestingly, for the first 500 years after Christ, nobody thought in terms of a pope. How did this come about? Because if you read the book of Acts, we studied through the book of Acts, verse by verse not long ago, what do you notice about the early church? Who's in charge in the early church? When they get ready to have a council in Jerusalem to make decisions about the Gentiles, and how much, if any, of the law the Gentiles should keep, and what sort of dietary laws they should follow, and are there any other rules for them to be able to come into the faith, who's in charge of that council? It's James.

Is Peter around? Yes, he is. But he's not in charge. Now, if Peter is the first pope, if Jesus commissioned him before Jesus was even crucified, way back in Matthew 16, how come Peter's not in charge? Why are not all of the other apostles deferring to Peter and saying, well, we need a decision here, let's go to Peter, because he's the vicar of Christ.

He's got the keys of the kingdom. What he binds is bound, and what he loses is loose. So right away, we have a biblical problem with the concept of Peter being the pope who can then pass on his authority to all of the subsequent popes, because the early church has no such notion.

There's nothing in the book of Acts that says that anybody went to Peter and said, Peter, we need a decision from you. In fact, Peter gets roundly rebuked by the apostle Paul, doesn't he, for starting to eat with the Gentiles, and then when men from James visited, Peter said, well, I'm sorry, I can't sit at your goyim table anymore because that's just really frowned upon by the men from Jerusalem. And he was sort of hypocritical, and he was upbraided and corrected by the apostle Paul for that.

Not only this, but what does the Bible say about the foundation of the church? What does Peter himself say about the foundation of the church? Well, you turn to 1 Peter 2, verses 4-8, and Peter says that Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone of the church. He doesn't say, hello there, scattered Jews of the diaspora in Pontus and Galatia and Cappadocia, I'm Peter and I'm the foundation of the church. This is my encyclical that I'm sending you.

I'm speaking ex cathedra, and I want you to do what I say because I've got the authority that Jesus gave me. What I bind is bounded. What I loose is loosed.

I've got the keys of the kingdom jingling right here on my belt. What does he say? He says Christ Jesus Himself is the chief cornerstone of the church. Paul echoes the same idea in

Ephesians 2, verse 20.

No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is the Apostle Peter. Is that what Ephesians 2, verse 20 says? Other foundation can no man lay except that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus is the foundation.

He is the rock upon which the church is built. I could give you a long Greek explanation for Matthew chapter 16 and the words of Jesus where he uses two different words. He says you are Peter, and on this rock, and he uses a different form of the word.

And this rock doesn't refer back to Peter. It refers to what Peter said. Who do you say that I am? Peter says you are the Christ.

You are the Son of the living God. And Jesus says that's the rock upon which the church is going to be built. I'm going to call you Peter because you've got the rock.

My Father has revealed it to you. You've been asking and seeking and knocking. You've been seeking it like silver and searching for it as for hidden treasure.

And my Father has given it to you. You have found the knowledge of God. And that's the rock upon which my ecclesia is going to be built.

Now think about this. On this rock I will build my church. Matthew chapter 16.

What is a church in the days of Jesus? The Greek word is ecclesia. And it's the word that simply means assembly. There could be an ecclesia almost anywhere.

Jesus said if you have ought against a brother, and there's a dissension and a dispute, go and try to be reconciled. And if he won't be reconciled, take one or two others with you and try again. And if he still won't be reconciled, take it before the ecclesia.

Now he's talking to Jews. And Jesus has not gone to the cross. And we're in the age of Israel.

What is the ecclesia? It's the assembly. Go to the large group. So when Jesus said on this rock I will build my church, he probably said it in Aramaic and we have a Greek translation of that.

What would the disciples have pictured? A building with a steeple and a parking lot and an education building and maybe a baptistry and pews and choir loft and organ and a piano and all the things that we associate with a church? Or that some associate with a church? What would they think of when Jesus said on this rock I will build my ecclesia? They're used to the ecclesia being an assembly of Jewish people who gather to settle disputes, to worship in harmony. There was an ecclesia at the synagogue. The assembled Jews came there to worship.

They would assemble to make decisions. They would assemble to work on a project. Kind of like in the Midwest 150 years ago, they might have barn raisings or they might have house raisings where many neighbors would all gather and assemble to accomplish something on behalf of

one neighbor or newlyweds.

That was an ecclesia. It just meant assembly. You are Peter.

And on this confession, this truth that you have acknowledged, this rock, which is the Messiahship and the Sonship of Jesus Christ, I will build my assembly. Jesus is going to have a new assembly. The Israelite assembly is built on what? The covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The Mosaic covenant, the law of Moses. That's the foundation upon which the Old Testament Israelite assembly is built. Now the new assembly is the church.

And we know that. But when Jesus spoke these words, He was looking forward beyond the time of His crucifixion. This assembly, Jesus had hoped to build out of Israel.

Remember, He is still in the Old Testament age. I am sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. In Matthew 16, the church is only in view in Jesus' mind.

Nobody else knows the church is coming. And when Jesus says, on this rock, I will build my assembly, this is the kingdom assembly. This is, at first blush, the response that God hoped to get from Israel when He sent the Messiah.

Those who would see the Son of God and respond to the Son of God and accept Him as Lord, Savior, and for Israel, as King, and would move into God's promised age of blessing and covenant fulfillment. What did Israel have to acknowledge so that Jesus Christ could build that assembly? They had to recognize Him as the Christ, as the Messiah, and as the Son of God. This is why Jesus asked the Pharisees, if David says, the Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool, we know that this is a reference to the Messiah, and we know that the Messiah is David's son, and yet David calls his son his Lord.

How can this be? Does that make sense? In the ancient world, the father was always greater than the son because he gave birth to the son. And so if David is the Messiah's father, then he should be greater than the Messiah, and yet David is calling the Messiah his Lord. The Lord said to my Lord.

This is a quote of David. And so Jesus says to the Pharisees, how can this be? How can David call his son his Lord? Well, they're scratching their head. They don't know.

Why? Because they don't acknowledge and they refuse to accept the fact that the Messiah is divine. And David can call his son his Lord because he's the Son of God. The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand.

And why can Jesus sit at the right hand of the Father? Because He's the Son of God. Peter figures this out. Now, that's the rock.

This is the single big misunderstanding upon which the entire dogma of the Catholic Church

rests. They misunderstand Matthew 16. Therefore, they misunderstand Peter and they think he's the first pope when he's not.

Think about this. In the book of Acts, if Jesus had designated Peter to be the pope, then who would the twelfth apostle be? Who picked Matthias to be the twelfth apostle? Who engineered that whole thing? Who prayed over it and presided over the casting of the lots? Peter. Peter went back and quoted Old Testament Scripture.

Peter went back and said, let's cast lots between Matthias and this other guy. And here's Matthias. He's chosen.

And then we never hear of Matthias again. If Peter's got authority to bind and loose, and if Peter's got the keys to the kingdom, and if Peter is the pope, how come Matthias didn't write Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, etc.? How come in the book of Acts we don't see the church rallying around Peter? When the apostle Paul is stricken on the Damascus Road and meets the Lord Jesus Christ, why doesn't he hasten back to Jerusalem and find Peter and say, hello there, Pope Peter I. I've just become a new believer and I need you to baptize me and I need you to do the sacraments on me and make me a rosary so I can pray to Mary and do all the other things that all you Catholics do. How many times is Mary mentioned in the book of Acts? The genesis of the church.

You can't get around Catholicism for more than 30 seconds without having Mary pop up in some way, shape, or form. And yet in the book of Acts, where's Mary? The Acts of the apostles. You've got Peter and John for 12 chapters.

You've got the apostle Paul for the remaining 14 chapters. And where's Mary? Seems kind of strange, doesn't it? Why is it that in episode after episode after episode in Acts, we don't see the church revolving around Peter? We don't see Peter going city by city and appointing bishops. We don't see Peter commissioning priests.

We don't see Peter sprinkling holy water or standing up on balconies and making the sign of the cross. We don't see Peter wearing the pointed hat. We don't see Peter administering extreme unction.

We don't see Peter performing marriages. We don't see Peter doing any of the sacraments. And we'll talk about them.

There are seven sacraments of the Catholic church. We don't see Peter performing any of them. We don't see any evidence that the church considered Peter to be the rock and the foundation and the center and the authority to which they must go to get their questions answered.

The Jerusalem council meets and makes very significant policy with regard to the Gentiles and Peter is not even mentioned. Peter talks at one point about the vision that he had, about the sheep that was let down and his experiences where he goes and meets with the Gentiles and so on, but everybody doesn't say, well, obviously if Peter says it, it must be so because he's the

pope. So, this is the fundamental root problem with Catholicism.

Now, the Bereans, in Acts chapter 17, when Paul began to preach to them, they didn't say, let's send a messenger to Peter and find out what the pope says. What did they do? They received the message with great eagerness and they examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. Well, we tend to rely on pastors and teachers as Protestants.

What's the difference between us and the Catholics? Catholics proclaim the pope and all of his under shepherds, the bishops and the priests and so on as not only authorities, but in some cases as infallible. The doctrine of the church is considered to be infallible. What men say in the church is considered infallible.

Nobody in the Protestant church, in their right mind, considers pastors and teachers to be infallible because we're not. We can make mistakes like anyone else. And the authority lies in the message.

To the extent that a pastor or a teacher teaches the Word of God, that message has authority. But the authority doesn't rest with the messenger, or it should not rest with the messenger in the Protestant church. And this is one of the distinctives between us and the Catholics.

The Catholic church, if it comes from the bishop, and especially if it comes from the pope speaking ex cathedra, well, that's just as good as Scripture. Well, the Catholic church, like many other cults and many other religions of the world, says all other forms of belief are invalid. And it is the only true church.

Part of the Catholic doctrine says we know that no other church but the Catholic church is the true church of Christ. They don't believe that Protestants are saved. The Catholics claim to accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God, but that's not the only Word of God that they accept.

This is what the church has stated. Holy Mother Church, relying on the belief of the apostles, holds that the books of both the Old and New Testament in their entirety with all their parts are sacred and canonical because having been written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author. We could agree with that, couldn't we? Other than the part about Holy Mother Church.

But we believe the books are inspired and authored by God. But here's the rest of what they say. This is a quote from the official Catholic doctrine.

Scripture is subject, finally, to the judgment of the church, which carries out the divine commission and ministry of guarding and interpreting the Word of God. We believe God wrote it. We believe it's inerrant and authoritative.

But, it is subject to the judgment of the church. We will tell you what it means. We will tell you what it says.

And our judgment is final. We guard, we interpret the Word of God. Roman Catholicism teaches that the church is the divinely appointed custodian and interpreter of the Bible.

That's a quote. Divinely appointed custodian and interpreter of the Bible. God never intended the Bible to be the Christian's rule of faith independently of the living authority of the church.

You can't get by with just the Bible. You must have the church or the Bible will do you no good because the church is the custodian and interpreter and God never intended you to have the Bible except as it's given to you through the living authority of the church. Well, is this true? We're going to pause here and take our break and when we come back we'll take a look at what Scripture says.

We'll take a look at what the Catholic Church says. And we'll see if the custodian and interpreter of the Scripture has actually interpreted the Scripture properly or not. But let's pause here and take our break.