

"What are some of the differences between Catholics and Protestants?" (student copy)

Galatians 1:8–9 (NET 2nd ed.)

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This is an important study, for it aims to identify what are several important differences between Catholics and those who are commonly referred to as being Protestants, which are any churches that differ in orthodoxy and orthopraxy from Catholicism.

1. Sola scriptura: "Scripture alone"

2. Sola fide: "faith alone"

3. Sola gratia: "grace alone"

4. Solo Christo or solus Christus: "Christ alone"

5. Soli Deo gloria: "to the glory of God alone"

- **Catholics reject the doctrine of sola scriptura and do not believe that the Bible alone is sufficient.**
- **Another disagreement between Catholicism and Protestantism is over the office and authority of the Pope.**
- **A third major difference between Catholicism and Protestantism is how one is saved. Catholics teach that the Christian must rely on faith plus "meritorious works" in order to be saved.**

The Sacraments of Initiation

Baptism:

Confirmation:

Eucharist:

The Sacraments of Healing

Penance:

Anointing the Sick:

The Sacraments of Service

Marriage:

Confession:

Holy Orders:

Mary: The Roman Catholic Church teaches, among other things, that Mary is the Queen of Heaven, a perpetual virgin, and the co-redemptress who ascended into heaven. In Scripture, she is portrayed as an obedient, believing servant of God, who became the mother of Jesus. None of the other attributes mentioned by the Roman Catholic Church have any basis in the Bible.

The idea of Mary being the co-redemptress and another mediator between God and man is not only extra-biblical (found only outside of Scripture), but is also unbiblical (contrary to Scripture). **Acts**

4:12 (NET 2nd ed.)

- **Catholics, on the other hand, believe that Christ’s righteousness is imparted to the believer by “grace through faith,” but in itself is not sufficient to justify the believer.**
- **The believer must supplement the righteousness of Christ imparted to him with meritorious works.**
- **Catholics and Protestants also disagree on what it means to be justified before God. To the Catholic, justification involves being made righteous and holy. He believes that faith in Christ is only the beginning of salvation and that the individual must build upon that with good works because God’s grace of eternal salvation must be merited.**
- This view of justification contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture in passages such as Romans 4:1–12, Titus 3:3–7, and many others.
- **Protestants distinguish between the one-time act of justification (when we are declared righteous by God based on our faith in Christ’s atonement on the cross) and the process of sanctification (the development of righteousness that continues throughout our lives on earth).**
- **While Protestants recognize that works are important, they believe they are the result or fruit of salvation but never the means to it.**
- **A fourth major difference between Catholics and Protestants has to do with what happens after death. Both believe that unbelievers will spend eternity in hell, but there**

are significant differences about what happens to believers. From their church traditions and their reliance on non-canonical books, the Catholics have developed the doctrine of purgatory.

- **Purgatory, according to the Catholic Encyclopedia, is a “place or condition of temporal punishment for those who, departing this life in God’s grace, are not entirely free from venial faults, or have not fully paid the satisfaction due to their transgressions.”**
- **On the other hand, Protestants believe that because we are justified by faith in Christ alone and that Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us—when we die, we will go straight to heaven to be in the presence of the Lord** (2 Corinthians 5:6–10 and Philippians 1:23).
- **One disturbing aspect about the Catholic doctrine of purgatory is the belief that man can and must pay for his own sins.**
- **The Roman Catholic view of salvation implies that Christ’s atonement on the cross was insufficient payment for the sins of those who believe in Him and that even a believer must pay for his own sins, either through acts of penance or time in purgatory.**
- Yet the Bible teaches that it is Christ’s death alone that can satisfy or propitiate God’s wrath against sinners (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10).
- Our works of righteousness cannot add to what Christ has already accomplished.