

ROMAN CATHOLICISM versus THE CHRIST OF THE BIBLE

Our news sources have been filled with visual images of the pomp and opulence of Roman Catholicism as its cardinals gathered from all over the globe to elect a new pope. This election was necessitated by the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI leaving the Roman Catholic Church without foundation, head or high priest. Post election, jockeying among the cardinals for influence and favor having run its course, that church now has a successor to the papacy in the person of Pope Francis. This election was a bit out of the ordinary. A papal replacement is usually needed because of the death of a pope rather than his resignation. However, the effect of the vacancy was the same as was the process of selecting a replacement, both referred to above.

Every one who has read after authorized Roman Catholic apologists is familiar with its claim to be the church Jesus promised to build and therefore the church of the New Testament. That this claim is completely false is easily seen in a comparison, actually a contrast, between Roman Catholicism's pope, priesthood and doctrine versus the Christ of the Bible.

The church's foundation. It is claimed that Peter is the one on whom Jesus promised to build his church and therefore became his church's first pope according to Catholicism's application of Matthew 16:18. Not so. Jesus referred to a statement by God recorded at Isaiah 28:16, the foundation stone of which was to be Jesus himself. In fact, Peter referred to Isaiah 28:16 and applied it, not to himself, but to the Lord, Jesus (I Peter. 2:4-6). See also I Corinthians 3:11.

The church's head and authority. It is claimed that Jesus is head over an invisible church in heaven while the pope is head over Christ's earthly visible church. This, too, is false. Subsequent to his resurrection and based on the power it conferred, Jesus said to his apostles, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18, emphasis added). Thus, while the pope may be the head of the Roman Catholic Church, Jesus Christ is the sole head of his church, the one therefore vastly different from the other (Ephesians 1:19-23).

Election to office. It is claimed that the pope is chosen by God and becomes the Vicar (substitute) of Christ on earth. How is it, then, that the pope, Catholicism's high priest, derives from a cardinal seeking the office who is elected by a two thirds majority vote of the cardinals? To the contrary, Jesus became sole high priest by God's choice and ascended to the office by virtue of his own sacrificial death and subsequent triumphant resurrection (Hebrews 5:5-11; 7:20-21).

Tenure in office. Roman Catholic popes come and go, some by death, a few by resignation, several by forced removal from office. How about Jesus? Did not he die, too? Well, yes, but as a willing atonement for man's sin (Hebrews 2:14-15; 9:15). What, then? In conquest of death Jesus arose by the power of God that was his, never to die again (Romans 6:9-10). Thus he exercises a priesthood that is not subject to termination by any earthly power (Hebrews 7:23-28).

Effectiveness of office. Roman Catholic doctrine holds that the bread and the wine of its eucharist becomes the literal flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. Thus, by the hand of the priest, the body and blood of Jesus is offered to God over and over, as often as the sacrifice of the mass is observed. However, the Bible teaches, "But this Man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God...For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:12, 14, emphasis added). Obviously, not only are the sacrifices of the Roman Catholic priest feckless, but the offering of them is blasphemous in its implication that Jesus' "once for all" sacrifice (Hebrews 7:27) was not sufficient for all time.

In all of these comparisons it is clear that Roman Catholicism stands in sharp contrast to Jesus Christ, and that the doctrine and church of the former is by no means that of the latter. The former is a corrupt perversion of man; the latter inheres in the Christ of God. —Jerry F. Bassett