

BIBLE STUDY SERIES



PROTESTANT PROTESTS

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Protestant Protests

Early in the sixteenth century, Martin Luther began the Protestant Reformation by challenging the beliefs and authority of the Roman Catholic Church. Luther used the Bible to prove that the route to salvation was through a walk of faith instead of salvation through works. However, the Catholic Church promulgated other doctrines unsupported by scripture. This booklet presents reasons why Protestants rebelled against the doctrines of prayers for the dead, purgatory, priests, and transubstantiation.

Prayers for the Dead

In the fourth century, Pope Damasus included the two books of Maccabees in the biblical canon. Book 2 has a story about Judas Maccabees that is a basis for the Catholic Church's understanding of death and purgatory.

Prayers for the Dead

“So Judas [Maccabee] having gathered together his army,¹ came into the city Odollam: and when the seventh day came, they purified themselves according to the custom, and kept the Sabbath in the place. And the day following Judas came with

1 This takes place about 170150 BC.

his company, to take away the bodies of them that were slain [fellow Jews], and to bury them with their kinsmen, in the sepulchres of their fathers. And they found under the coats of the slain some of the donaries [that is, symbols, or religious charms] of the idols of Jamnia, which the law forbiddeth to the Jews: so that all plainly saw [the idolatry of their brothers], that for this cause they were slain [because they had deliberately defied God].

Then they all blessed the just judgment of the Lord, who had discovered the things [sins] that were hidden [from plain view]. And so betaking themselves to prayers, they besought him [God], that the sin which had been committed might be forgotten. But the most valiant Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves from sin, forasmuch as they saw before their eyes what had happened, because of the sins of those that were slain.

And making a gathering, he sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem for [a sin offering, a] sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead [Jews], thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection [that maybe God would forgive their defiance and not hold their idolatry against them], (For if he [Judas] had not hoped that they

that were slain should rise again, [most of the Jews believed there was no resurrection,] it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead,) And because he [Judas] considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness, had great grace laid up for them [because of Abraham's righteousness]. It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from [the guilt of their] sins."¹

One reason Protestants rejected including Maccabees in the biblical canon because it was contrary to scripture. For example, God condemned Judas' actions of Judas for three reasons:

1. Jesus said, **"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his [my] voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those *who have done what is evil* will rise to be condemned."**²
2. **"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things *done while in the body, whether good or bad.*"**³

1 2 Maccabees 12:38-46; Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition

2 John 5:28-29

3 2 Corinthians 5:10

3. **“For everyone belongs to me, the parent as well as the child—both alike belong to me. *The one who sins is the one who will die.*”¹ No amount of wailing, prayers, begging, or sums of money alters God’s judgment; if so, God is unfair to those who have no advocate. Each person is responsible for his actions while in this body. **“For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”**²**
4. **“The one who sins is the one who will die. The child will not share the guilt of the parent, nor will the parent share the guilt of the child. The righteousness of the righteous will be credited to them, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against them.”**³
5. **“Or if I bring a sword against that country [for apostasy] and say, ‘Let the sword pass throughout the land,’ and I kill its people and their animals, as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, even if these three men were in it [Noah, Daniel and Job], they could not save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved.”**⁴

1 Ezekiel 18–4

2 Ecclesiastes 12–14

3 Ezekiel 18:20

4 Ezekiel 14:17–18

The books of Maccabees do not agree with a plain “thus saith the Lord.” These books produce internal conflict within the Bible, and this is why Protestants rejected the apocryphal books. Even Jerome, who translated them into Latin in the fourth century was opposed including them in the Bible, but the pope had his way.

No Purgatory

Notice, the money Judas sent to Jerusalem for the dead was not to release souls from purgatory, it was sent as a sin offering so that at the resurrection, God might not condemn the idol worshipers. Using human reasoning, the pagan practice of bribing God made its way into Israel. To make God *more inclined* to judge favorably for people doing wrong, a substantial gift was sent to the temple as a sacrifice by his family.

This was the practice, but it was not God’s instruction because God does not give a second chance for salvation after death. It was greedy priests that blessed this scheme, and Judas innocently and ignorantly paid a ransom for those worshiping an idol.

When a person dies, his life record also ends, it is sealed by death.

“For the living know that they will die, but the

dead know nothing. . . never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun.”¹

“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.”²

Eternal life requires faithfulness to the end.

“But if a righteous person turns from their righteousness and commits sin and does the same detestable things the wicked person does, will they live? None of the righteous things that person has done will be remembered. Because of the unfaithfulness they are guilty of and because of the sins they have committed, they will die.”³

“You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm [in faith] to the end will be saved.”⁴

“But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called ‘Today,’ so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end.”⁵

1 Ecclesiastes 9:56

2 Ecclesiastes 9:10

3 Ezekiel 18:24

4 Matthew 10:22

5 Hebrews 3:13–15

“For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.”¹

“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”²

Who are the *dead in Christ* if not those people *who were faithful to the end and died in Christ*? Will Jesus, who loves sinners far more than we can, be influenced by money or prayers to ignore the record of a dead person’s life? In fairness and justice, before millions of watching angels, can Jesus be enticed to ignore or twist the truth when judging the dead? No, of course not. **“Those who are victorious will inherit all this [the new earth], and I will be their God and they will be my children. *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters* [including the ones that Judas discovered on the**

1 John 6:40

2 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17

battlefield] *and all liars*—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”¹

The Rich Man and Lazarus

Catholics and some Protestants who believe in life after death use Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus to support their position.

“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’

But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is com-

¹ Revelation 21:7–8

forted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'

He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'

'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'

He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"¹

In order to interpret this story, we need to understand Jewish culture when Jesus was on Earth. The Jews believed wealth was a sign of God's favor and poverty was a sign of God's rejection. In this parable, Jesus nixed this idea by putting Lazarus in a better place than the rich man. The rich man is Caiaphas, the high priest who would later condemn Jesus to death. Caiaphas had five brothers who also served as

¹ Luke 16:19-31

high priests:

Eleazar the son of Ananus (AD 16–17)

Jonathan the son of Ananus (spring AD 37)

Theophilus ben Ananus (AD 37–41)

Matthias ben Ananus (AD 43)

Ananus ben Ananus (AD 63)

The beggar was Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, whom Jesus would later resurrect. The Jews that heard this parable knew who Jesus was talking about, but since Lazarus had not yet died they were puzzled. The parable does not teach there is awareness in the grave (the six brothers and Lazarus were all alive at the time Jesus told this parable), it teaches that religious leaders can become so arrogant and stubborn that the resurrection of a fellow Pharisee would have no influence in their hearts. In fact, after his resurrection, the high priest wanted to also kill Lazarus.

“Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.”¹

¹ John 12:9–11

None are as blind as those who refuse to see. This is the moral of the parable.

Protestants Reject Priests and Popes

Early in the reformation, Protestants rejected priests and popes as mediators for salvation for these biblical reasons.

1. A priest or pope on Earth is not needed as a mediator. There is only one mediator between man and God. **“For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time. And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles.”**¹
2. Jesus is the head of His church. **“Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.”**²
3. As the head of His church, Jesus has not appointed priests or popes to serve his church. **“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to**

¹ 1 Timothy 2:57

² Ephesians 5:23

equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ [His Church] may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”¹

4. There was no pope or priest serving Christ’s church during New Testament time (first century).
5. Even though Peter was outspoken, none of the apostles recognized him as having special authority. In fact, there is total silence in the New Testament on this supposed special authority. This is because the first leader of the church was James, the brother of Jesus.²
6. Paul did not consider himself a priest or a pope. **“This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed.”³**
7. When Jesus appeared to John on Patmos about AD 95, the messages Jesus gave to John for his seven churches were not through priests or pope. Jesus gave them to John who sent the messages as letters to the seven churches.

1 Ephesians 4:11–13

2 Acts 15; Galatians 1:19

3 1 Corinthians 4:1

8. Judaism required priests from the tribe of Levi. God abandoned this system by appointing Jesus as our high priest. **“For when the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also.”**¹

Christianity has one priest and mediator before God. There is no need for an earthly priest. **“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are —yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”**²

9. Christians have one mediator in Heaven. **“We have this hope [for salvation] as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain [in heaven, in the very presence of God], where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek [that is, divinely appointed].”**³

1 Hebrews 7:12

2 Hebrews 4:14–16

3 Hebrews 6:19–20

10. Protestants believe God does not approve priests and popes. Most Protestants today recognize only Christ as a mediator between themselves and God.¹ The Epistle to the Hebrews calls Jesus the supreme *high priest*, who offered himself as a perfect sacrifice.²

Protestants believe that through Christ they have been given direct access to God, just like a priest in Old Testament times; thus the doctrine is called *the priesthood of all believers*. God is equally accessible to all the faithful and every Christian has equal potential to minister for God. This doctrine stands in opposition to the concept of a spiritual aristocracy or hierarchy within Christianity.³

11. The Bible declares the redeemed from every nation will serve God throughout eternity as a kingdom of priests. “[Jesus] **He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twentyfour elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God’s people. And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are**

1 1 Timothy 2:5

2 Hebrews 7:23–28

3 [https://infogalactic.com/info/Universal_priesthood_\(doctrine\)](https://infogalactic.com/info/Universal_priesthood_(doctrine))

worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.’”¹

12. Peter, a devoted Jew, came to understand the priesthood of *all* believers. He describes Gentile believers as a holy nation, a royal priesthood: **“But you are [now] a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”²**
13. John also understood the priesthood of *all* believers. Believers will be elevated for eternity as a kingdom or nation of priests. **“Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits [angels] before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who**

¹ Revelation 5:7–10

² 1 Peter 2:9–10

is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.”¹

14. The strongest evidence against priests and popes comes from Jesus. **“But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers [equals]. And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”²**

Protestants reject the succession of Peter and a special class of people called priests and popes.

Presumed Authority of Popes and Priests

“When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say the Son of Man is?’

¹ Revelation 1:46

² Matthew 23:8–12

They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ ‘But what about you?’ He asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You [Greek: singular you] are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus replied, ‘Blessed are you, *Simon son of Jonah*, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in Heaven.’”¹

On this occasion, Jesus had a very important reason for confronting the disciples with His identity. When Jesus asked the question, the Father, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, instantly put words in Peter’s mouth, causing Peter to plainly state to the other disciples that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Peter did not know this fact until this moment. His words were shocking for the disciples. The Jews believed a son was the equal of his father.² Therefore, when Peter declared Jesus to be a Son, the equal of Almighty God, the disciples were stunned!

This event occurred just before Jesus announced that *He* was establishing a new religious system. The church of Jesus would be unlike the synagogue of Satan.³ The Father properly identified Jesus by speaking through Peter before Jesus made His an-

1 Matthew 16:13–17

2 John 5:18

3 Revelation 2:9; 3:9

nouncement. The Father also designed that Peter's bold declaration would help Jewish converts to abandon their ingrained culture and synagogues later on.

It is important to note that Jesus addressed Peter using his formal name, *Simon, son of Jonah*. Jesus did not use the Aramaic name He had given to Peter (Cephas) when He called him to be a disciple because Jesus wanted to use two Greek words, *petros* and *petra*, to declare a divine truth. These words are not properly translated or identified in the English language.

Turning to Peter, Jesus said “**And I tell you that you are *petros*** [Greek: *petros*, a piece of a rock or a stone – the word *petros* is often transliterated to sound like Peter in English], **and** [then pointing to Himself, He said, but] **on this the rock *petra*** [Greek: “the” is left out of many translations, but is an important definite article in this context because this *petra*, is not any rock, He is *the* Rock of Ages (*the* *petra* of Israel), on this rock] **I will build my church, and the gates of Hades** [even the grave to which I am going] **will not overcome it.”**¹ After the Father used Peter to declare Jesus' identity, Jesus declared himself to be *Petra* of Israel because the disciples were well acquainted with the idea and the phrase, “The *Petra* of Israel.”²

1 Matthew 16:18

2 Genesis 49:24; Deuteronomy 32:18; 2 Samuel 23:3; Psalm 18:31; 1 Corinthians 10:4

The disciples grew up believing in monotheism (one God exists and His name is Jehovah). They could not know and did not realize until this moment that there was more than one God. Suddenly, they learned that Jesus, the Son of God, the *Petra* of Israel was the God of the Old Testament! **“For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.”**¹

Can you imagine their surprise? Standing before them in their presence was the Rock of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! Jesus continued speaking to His disciples, **“I will give you [my disciples – all who believe in Me] the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; whatever you bind on Earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth will be loosed in Heaven.”**² Centuries later, church leaders in Rome interpreted Matthew 16:18 to mean that Jesus gave one disciple and presumably

1 1 Corinthians 10:14

2 Matthew 16:19

his successors *all authority* over matters on Earth. This is why through the ages popes have been called “The Vicar [substitute] of Christ.” Catholics believe Jesus has given the popes sovereign power to bind or loosen anything on Earth. Naturally, after the church made the claim, it has tenaciously defended this idea and the assumed power that goes with it. A superficial reader of the Bible might easily reach the same conclusion after reading Matthew 16:18-19. Therefore, it is no surprise that many sincere Catholics today believe that Jesus gave Peter and his successors *all authority* over matters on Earth.

What Did Jesus Mean?

Jesus had an important purpose when He said to His disciples, “**I will give you** [as a group, not meaning Peter alone, but to all of his disciples] **the keys of the kingdom of heaven.**” Jesus meant that in His absence His followers, the members of His church, would have authority for self-direction and self-determination. Later, Jesus also promised the Holy Spirit would sustain and guide His church to ensure it would endure until His return.¹ Jesus would lead His followers into greater truth through the ministry of the Spirit. The church of Jesus was not founded on petros, a small stone. Jesus founded His church upon

¹ John 16:12-15

Himself, *petra*, The Eternal Rock of Ages. He has the power over life and death (*Hades*, the grave).¹

Jesus decentralized His church's authority, unlike Judaism, so no man could have authority over everyone else! His disciples must be led by the Spirit and this creates a bit of chaos in the church because some people are eager to follow the Spirit into new truth and others are not. Jesus established his church so one man could not keep his disciples from progressive revelation.²

Most religious systems in the world today (other than the Catholic Church and its offspring such as the Orthodox variants and Anglicans) are decentralized when it comes to spiritual authority. For example Muslims have many imams, even Grand Mufti's, but no one imam has authority over all Muslims. The same is also true for Hindus, Buddhists, and Protestants.

Did the Apostles the Authority to Forgive Sins

“On the evening of that first day of the week [resurrection Sunday], when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you!’ After he said this, he showed

1 Revelation 1:18

2 Romans 16:25–27

them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, *I am sending you.*’ And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.’”¹

The Catholic Church uses this passage along with Matthew 16 to underscore the idea that its clergy have the authority to forgive [loosen] or not to forgive sins [bind]. Protestants view this verse in a totally different light for several reasons. First, after Jesus said this, there is no mention of the disciples forgiving anyone of his sins in the New Testament. Second, there is abundant evidence in the New Testament showing the disciples preached the forgiveness of sin came through faith in Jesus. Consider these verses:

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”²

“By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that

¹ John 20:19–23

² Acts 2:38

has completely healed him, as you can all see. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.”¹

“Jesus is ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.’ Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”²

“Peter answered: ‘May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.’”³

“So then, King Agrippa, I [Paul] was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds.”⁴

1 Acts 3:16, 19

2 Acts 4:11–12

3 Acts 8:20–22

4 Acts 26:19–20

“But Paul shouted, ‘Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!’ The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ They replied, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.’”¹

The disciples’ actions recorded in the book of Acts confirm they did not interpret Jesus’ words to mean he was giving them the authority to forgive sin; rather, they understood He was sending them to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sin through faith in Jesus. There is a tremendous difference between the two. Where their message was received, forgiveness would happen. Where their message was rejected, forgiveness would not happen. This conclusion aligns with their actions and does not put the Bible in a state of internal conflict. Only God can forgive sinners.

“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. If we confess our sins, he is

¹ Acts 16:28–31

faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”¹

“Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy.”²

Can a sinner forgive a sinner? Can a sinner cleanse himself and the rest of us from our unrighteousness? The Bible says *no*.

“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”³

Protestants Reject Transubstantiation

Catholics believe the bread and wine received at Mass is the flesh and blood of Jesus though there is no change in the appearance in the bread and wine. They

1 1 John 2:12, 1:9

2 Micah 7:18

3 Hebrews 4:14–16

believe the doctrine of transubstantiation necessary for salvation because Jesus said, **“Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.”**¹

According to the teaching of the Catholic Church, transubstantiation is the change of the whole substance of bread into the substance of the Body of Christ and of the whole substance of wine into the substance of the Blood of Christ. This change occurs in the Eucharistic prayer through the efficacy of the word of Christ and by Holy Spirit action. However, the outward characteristics of bread and wine, that is the Eucharistic species, remain unaltered. In this teaching, the notions of substance and transubstantiation are not linked with any particular theory of metaphysics.²

Protestants reject this because they believe in ordinances. They do not believe that any ritual or rite is necessary for salvation. **“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. For it is by grace you have been saved, through**

1 John 6:54–55

2 <https://infogalactic.com/info/Transubstantiation>

faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”¹

An ordinance differs from a rite. A rite is *required* for salvation, an ordinance does not affect salvation.

According to Luke 22:14, when the hour came (midnight²) Jesus and his disciples began eating the Passover meal in the upper room. For more than 1,400 years, the Jews had observed the Passover meal. A few understood the flawless paschal lamb *represented* the coming Savior of the world, the Lamb of God,³ whose death would save sinners from eternal death, but this prophetic purpose was largely lost because Passover for the Jews was a ritual focused on Israel’s exodus from Egypt.

While they were eating, Jesus did something unusual. **“For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is [represents] my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup [represents] is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For whenever you eat**

1 Ephesians 2:4–5, 89

2 Exodus 12:8–12, 29

3 John 1:29, Revelation 5:6

this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." Jesus did not specify the frequency of this ordinance, He left that decision to His followers.

A year earlier, about the time of the Passover,¹ Jesus had an intense discussion with the Jews. Before we delve into this discussion, you need to know the timing and background to appreciate Jesus' use of language in John. This discussion occurred in Capernaum, a Roman enclave, most likely during a Roman festival. To the Jews, the Romans celebrated a disgusting festival around the time of Passover called, "Day of Blood."

"Dies Sanguinis (Day of Blood) was a festival held in Ancient Rome on March 24. Also known as Bellona's Day, this was an occasion when the Roman votaries of the war-goddess Bellona cut themselves and drank this sacrificial blood to propitiate the deity. The priests of the goddess Cybele (the galli) flogged themselves until they bled and sprinkled their blood upon the image and the altars in the sanctuary, while others are said to have imitated Attis by castrating themselves.

However. Roman citizens were forbidden from engaging in self-castration, so in time the Galli were all

1 John 6:4

non-citizens. Such painful and dramatic acts allowed the worshipers to identify with the pain and death of Attis, to whom were dedicated a cycle of festivities, which were celebrated from March 15 to 28. These festivities celebrated the death of the god. Among these, there were the *Sanguem* and the *Hilaria*.

The Hilaria on March 25 brought renewed joy and hope. There was feasting in honor of the Great Mother and good cheer. The spring festival came to a close with a much-needed day of rest (March 26) and a final day (March 27) on which the holy image of the Great Mother was bathed in the Almo River.¹

As we consider the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, let's read John 6.

“[After teaching and feeding a large crowd of 5,000 Jews with five loaves of bread and two fish, Jesus slipped away and traveled across the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum, but some the Jews from Galilee soon found him.] **‘Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.** [Jesus meant, they saw the fulfillment of a fantasy: A prophet like Moses who could provide good food and it was labor free! Jesus knowing this replied,] **Do**

¹ https://infogalactic.com/info/Dies_sanguinis

not work for [physical] food that spoils, but for [spiritual] food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval [meaning, you can trust my words].'

Then they asked him, 'What must we do to do the works God requires [for salvation]?' Jesus answered, 'The work of God is this: to believe in [me and my words,] the one he has sent.'

So they asked him, 'What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness [fresh food each day]; as it is written: "He [Moses] gave them bread from heaven to eat."'"

Jesus said to them, 'Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the [physical] bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread [spiritual bread for the soul] from heaven. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives [abundant light and] life to the world [that lives in darkness and suffering because of sin's curse].'

'Sir,' they said, 'always give us this [daily] bread.' Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me [receiving me as the Son of

God and obeys my gospel] **will never go hungry** [spiritually speaking], **and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty** [spiritually speaking]. **But as I told you, you have seen me** [perform signs and miracles] **and still you do not believe. All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him** [his teaching] **shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.'**

At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.' They said, **'Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, "I came down from heaven?"'**

'Stop grumbling among yourselves,' Jesus answered. 'No one can come to me [accept my teaching] **unless the Father who sent me draws them** [through the ministry of the Holy Spirit], **and I will raise them up at the last day.**

It is written in the Prophets: “They will all be taught by God.” [I am the fulfillment of this prophecy.] **Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him** [through the ministry of the Holy Spirit] **comes to me. No one has seen the Father except [me] the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. Very truly I tell you, the one who believes [in me] has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness [fresh food from heaven], yet they died. But here [standing before you] is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die [the second death].**

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread [takes my words into his heart and applies them] **will live forever. This [free and fresh] bread is [made known to you in] my flesh, which I will give [as a sacrifice] for the life of the world.’**

Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, ‘How can this man give us his flesh to eat?’

Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood [take my words into your heart and apply

them), **you have no [spiritual] life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood* has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is real food [not imaginary] and my blood is real drink [not imaginary]. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood [takes my words into his heart and applies them] remains in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me and I live [in this body] because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live [again in his body] because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread [pointing to himself] will live forever.’ He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.”**

Every Jew present knew two facts:

First, God had forbidden the eating or drinking of blood. **“For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life. Therefore I say to the Israelites, ‘None of you may eat blood, nor may any foreigner residing among you eat blood.’”**¹

1 Leviticus 17:11–12

Second, the Romans regularly drank blood to gain the approval of their gods. Jesus used this shocking contrast to drive home the point that eating his flesh and drinking his blood will win the approval of the true God, He will raise them up at the last day. His teachings are true, His words are food and drink for the soul if a person is willing to be led into all truth by the Holy Spirit.

“On hearing it [drinking blood], many of his disciples said, ‘This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?’ Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, ‘Does this offend you? Then what if you see the Son of Man [the Bread of Life] ascend to where he was before! The Spirit gives life [its true purpose and fulfillment]; the [life that is born of the] flesh counts for nothing.

The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe.’ For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to say, ‘This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has [first] enabled them.’ [By this Jesus means, before a person can come to Jesus, he has

to become spiritually alive. The Father attempts to speak to each heart through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, those that are willing to obey the Spirit become spiritually alive. Otherwise, a person remains spiritually dead. They are controlled by the flesh – the sinful nature.]”

Three Points about Transubstantiation

Given the discussion in John 6, what is gained through the supposed magic of transubstantiation? In fact, from the Protestant point of view the doctrine is harmful in three ways:

1. Participants are grossly misled, thinking this ritual is necessary for eternal life.
2. It is a terrible distortion of Scripture to teach that Jesus’ flesh and blood is needed in a common way. Jesus used common things to describe uncommon spiritual concepts. The doctrine of transubstantiation leads participants away from the wonderful truth that Jesus teaches in John 6.
3. Participants may feel momentarily gratified by the miracle of transubstantiation, but eating a paschal lamb, a wafer, or taking a sip of wine is not spiritually edifying. Many Catholic participants feel their salvation is always tentative, they

need the rituals of the church to escape Hell. In essence, Catholics are dependent on the church for salvation. Protestants are dependent on the righteousness of Jesus.

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