



Catholic Conversations

Discovering the
Supremacy of Grace



Catholic Conversations

- Week 1: **Scripture** (How does God speak to the world?)
- Week 2: **Sin** (How are we made in the image of God?)
- Week 3: **Sacraments** (What is the church?)
- Week 4: **Salvation** (Why are people accepted by God?)



A Few Disclaimers

- The presenter was never Catholic
- There will be broad generalizations – denominationally, theologically, historically
- Time/scope challenge
- Our goal is to understand and not to villainize



Introductory Observations

- All Christians were “**Catholic**” for 1054 years; and **Catholic** or **Eastern Orthodox** for the next 463 years.
- The Reformation was headlined by **Martin Luther**, who, in 1517, “protested” abuses and championed a movement to return the church to an earlier, biblical expression of the faith.
- Martin Luther was a Catholic Priest who taught **Biblical Studies** at the University of Wittenberg.
- Luther nailed the **95 Theses** to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517.

The Castle Church Today





How does God reveal Himself today?

- Catholics and Protestants together affirm that God reveals Himself to the world through both GENERAL and SPECIAL revelation
- The Catholic Church holds that special revelation includes both SCRIPTURE and TRADITION
- **TRADITION:** the teaching of the Church's magisterium (the Pope and the Bishops), who are the spiritual successors of the Apostles



Tradition and Scripture

“Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture are bound closely together and communicate one with another. For both of them flowing out of **the same divine well-spring** come together . . . and move toward the same goal” (CCC 80).

The Catholic Church “does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with **equal sentiments of devotion and reverence**” (CCC 82).



Catholic Rationale for Scripture and Tradition

John 16:12 – “I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.”

- They expressed confusion (vs. 16-24)
- They would abandon Him (vs. 25-33)
- Judas' betrayal (John 18:1-8)
- Peter's denial (John 18:15-18; 25-27)




What is the Protestant response?

Protestants hold to the
sufficiency and **necessity** of Scripture

See 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 1: 20-21; and 3:15-16

SUFFICIENCY: Scripture provides **everything** people need to be saved from sin and death, and everything that Christians need to please God fully.

NECESSITY: Scripture is **essential** for knowing the way of salvation, for progressing in godliness, and for understanding God's will.



“The Church must be infallible if the Bible is infallible.”

- Peter Kreeft, Catholic Philosopher
and Theologian

Of What does the Bible Consist?

- ▶ The **Catholic version** of the Bible includes the books of the **Apocrypha**:

Tobit, Judith, the Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, 1 and 2 Maccabees, 1 and 2 Esdras, additions to Esther (1 book), and additions to Daniel (4 books).

- ▶ The **Hebrew Bible** exists in three divisions: Law, Prophets, and Writings (no books from the Apocrypha are included in the Hebrew Bible)
- ▶ The **Septuagint (LXX)**, a Greek translation of the OT, appeared just before the time of Jesus. The Septuagint included the additional apocryphal writings.

The Rise of the Latin *Vulgate*

- In the second century after Christ, the common language of the world in which Christianity was expanding changed from **Greek** to **Latin**.
- The OT of the first Latin Bibles was translated from the **Septuagint**, and not the Hebrew Bible, so they included the apocryphal books.
- In 382 AD, **Jerome** was commissioned to make a new translation of the Bible. At first he *excluded* the books of the Apocrypha, but he was persuaded by a friend to include the apocryphal books (i.e. Augustine).
- The final translation of Jerome's Latin Vulgate, which included the Apocrypha, became the **official Bible** of the Catholic Church.

Why reject the Apocrypha?

- There are absolutely no quotes from the Apocrypha in the NT.
- Many early Church Fathers rejected the Apocrypha, including Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Origen, and Jerome.
- The books were NOT part of the Christian writings, so they were not under the province of the Christian Church to decide; the books focus on Jewish intertestamental history.
- The Greek Orthodox Church didn't accept the Apocrypha until 1638, caving to the Western Church after the Council of Trent. But then reversed their decision in 1839 because the Apocrypha wasn't included in the Jewish/OT Canon.



Why does the early translation history of the Bible matter to us?

The Doctrine of

Purgatory

Prayers and offerings
for the dead


2 Maccabees 12:38-45

The Sacrament of

Penance

“Do Acts of” Repentance

Matthew 4:17



“If anyone does not receive, as sacred and canonical, these books (The Apocrypha), with all their parts, as they have been read in the Catholic Church and as they are contained in the old Latin Vulgate edition . . . let them be anathema.”

- The Council of Trent (1546)

Purgatory. Prayer for the dead. The Sacrament of Penance. These are major points of division between Catholics and Protestants, and they all stem from their use of different Bibles and a different understanding of authority.



How are Christians to understand
the Word of God?

Catholics:

- ▶ Point to their Church's hierarchy to render official interpretation of the Bible.
- ▶ Consider the Word of God to consist of both Scripture and Tradition.
- ▶ Embrace a three-fold structure of authority: written Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium.



How are Christians to understand
the Word of God?

Protestants:

- Embrace the authority of *sola Scriptura*.
- Champion the clarity of Scripture under the illumination of the Holy Spirit.
- Believe the Holy Spirit gives the gift of teaching to some church members to help the congregation interpret, understand and properly apply the Word of God.

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Next Week: (talk about) **Sin**

The Image of God

The effects of the Fall

Original Sin

There's something about Mary