

Chapter 1: Do You Have The Mass Like The Catholic Church?

This is a very important question, since the mass is the heart of most Roman Catholic meetings. Protestants have the Lord's supper, also called the communion, which, though it resembles the mass, is not the same. The outward form of the mass has been modified to make it much more similar to our communion service than it was when it was said in Latin, but the differences in its basic meaning remain.

The Roman Catholic doctrine of the mass was established at the Council of Trent, which affirmed, among other things, that it is, "a sacrifice of expiation... of sins and the punishment for sins... not merely for the living, but also for the poor souls in Purgatory" (Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, pp. 412-413). The Roman church thus teaches that Christ's sacrifice is renewed in the mass, and that each time the mass is said, this renewing of His sacrifice adds a bit of merit that can count toward one's salvation. When the mass is said for the dead, it is supposed to reduce by an unknown amount, the time they must suffer in purgatory for their sins.

In practice, many people, probably the majority in most Roman Catholic countries, have been taught that after a death in the family, they must give more or less unending offerings to the priests for masses to shorten their loved one's time in purgatory. This is particularly tragic for the widows who are often poor and very religious. While many priests are not in agreement with this doctrine, and do not even accept offerings for the mass in these conditions, others bring to one's mind the admonition of Christ in the Scriptures, *Be on guard against the scribes, who like to parade around in their robes and accept marks of respect in public, front seats in the synagogues, and places of honor at banquets. These men devour the savings of widows and recite long prayers for appearance' sake; it is they who will receive the severest sentence* (Mark 12:38-40) In Italy, the very heart of Roman Catholicism, there is a saying which is often used when someone wants to say "you only get what you pay for." Translated word for word it is, "Without money, they don't sing the mass."

Do the Bread and Wine Become Christ's Body And Blood?

As a foundation for the teaching that Christ's sacrifice can and should be renewed in the mass, Roman Catholic doctrine insists that the bread and wine used in the communion service are changed by a miracle. This miracle is not evident, that is, the substances still look like bread and wine. Nevertheless, Catholic doctrine insists that they actually become the flesh and blood of Jesus, and are no longer bread and wine. This supposed miracle is called transubstantiation. It is based on a tradition which entered the church gradually, and was accepted as doctrine by the Lateran Council of 1215 A.D. It was after this, around the year 1226, that Catholics began to bow down before the bread. The church, having accepted this tradition, tries to give the practice the appearance of a biblical basis with a strange interpretation of these words of Jesus Christ: *...and after He had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after the supper, He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me. ...this cup is the new covenant in my blood"*(1 Corinthians 11:24-25). The Catholic interpretation is that the bread and wine which Christ held in His hand was by a miracle transformed into His body.

Some try to reduce this to simply a question of literal or figurative interpretation of this scripture. However, it is more. Please note that when Christ said these words He was standing before His disciples in His body, holding up the bread and wine so that it was clear that the words *This is my body* were intended to be understood symbolically. There can be no doubt of this because after He stated, *This is my body*, He called it bread three times, which He certainly would not have done if at that point it was no longer bread, but had literally become

His body (*every time you eat this bread...* 1 Corinthians 11:26-28). Since Christ called the substance both *bread*, and *body*, He must have been speaking symbolically either when He called it bread, or when He called it body. The question is not, "Should we interpret the passage literally or symbolically?" The question is "Which part must be interpreted literally and which part symbolically?" Was Christ speaking literally when he called the substance which He held in His hand his body, or when he called it bread? One or the other must have been symbolic. The only other choice is that it changed from bread to body, then back to bread.

We find a similar statement in Mark 14:25, when Jesus calls the wine, *fruit of the vine*, after the point at which, according to Catholic doctrine, it should no longer have been fruit of the vine, but should have been completely transformed into the blood of Christ. If it had already been literally changed into blood, would Jesus not have called it *blood* instead of *fruit of the vine*? He also said, *I am the door*. Did He not mean that it is through Him that we can enter heaven, rather than that the substance of his body had been changed into wood?

Even more important is the fact that in the mass, at the moment that the miracle should occur, nothing happens! By way of comparison, Christ also changed water into wine. In this case, it was clear to all that it was no longer water, but had actually become wine: *The waiter in charge tasted the water made wine, without knowing where it came from; only the other waiters knew, since they had drawn the water. Then the waiter in charge called the groom over and remarked to him: "People usually serve the choice wine first; then when the guests have been drinking awhile, a lesser vintage. What you have done is keep the choice wine until now"* (John 2:8-10). Think of Christ's other miracles. When He healed the paralytic and the man who was lame, did they continue to lie there as if nothing had happened?

Let us not lose sight of the true purpose of the communion service. Christ never once told His disciples to offer his body again, but He told them twice, to partake *in remembrance of Him* (1 Corinthians 11:24-25). We honor Christ by doing what He commands.

Can Christ's Sacrifice Be Renewed?

With these Scriptures as a background, we are ready to examine the strong evidence of Hebrews chapter 10, verses 10-18. I encourage you to study the chapters before this as well, not only to see that I am not taking verses out of context to change the meaning, but because chapters seven and nine also discuss this subject.

Hebrews 10:10 tells us bluntly that the sacrifice of Christ can not be renewed ... *We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all* (See also Romans 6:9-10). It is clear from this verse that there is no necessity or possibility of further sacrifice because it says that Christ's body was offered once for all. The passage, however, does not stop here but goes on to state with even more detail and clarity, *Every other priest stands ministering day by day and offering again and again those same sacrifices which can never take away sins. But Jesus offered one sacrifice for sins and took his seat forever at the right hand of God* (Hebrews 10:11-12). Here Jesus is contrasted with the Hebrew priests who offer repeated sacrifices. What is the difference between them and Jesus? Jesus does not stand *offering again and again those same sacrifices*, but he has offered one sacrifice which was enough. As He died on the cross he stated, "It is finished." How does the daily renewal of his sacrifice in the mass fit with these verses? It does not! It contradicts them. It is exactly the opposite.

The last part of this passage gives a reason why Christ's sacrifice can not be renewed. *He took his seat forever at the right hand of God*. This is in complete agreement with the Bible's explanation that as His disciples watched, Christ, *was lifted up before their eyes in a cloud which took Him from their sight* (Acts 1:9). Where is Christ now? He went up to heaven,

where, as this passage states, He *took his seat forever at the right hand of God*. Forever means that He is still there (See Acts 3:21).

Many think that Christ's body is in the consecrated wafer in the tabernacle at the front of every Roman Catholic Church, and they bow to it whenever they pass. If this were true, perhaps his sacrifice could be renewed, but the Scripture clearly states that He offered one single sacrifice which was adequate for our complete salvation, and that His body is now in heaven. We are to take the bread and wine in remembrance of Him (1 Corinthians 11:24-25).

One of the things we remember is His one sufficient sacrifice. Bowing before the bread is idolatry because it is bread and not Jesus Christ. In addition, if we become confused and think that the wafer is Christ, we are apt to lose the significance of communion, and miss taking it in *remembrance* of Him.

The Catholic doctrine of the repeated renewal of Christ's sacrifice keeps many from heaven because it infers that Christ's sacrifice on the cross for our sins was insufficient. If not, why would it need to be repeated many times?

The idea that Christ's sacrifice was not enough is then used to lead us to believe that the person who dies must suffer in purgatory to pay for his own sins until Christ has been offered enough times to work up the merit necessary to finish off the payment. Our passage in Hebrews 10 leaves no doubt about this, however. It goes on in verse 14 to say, *By one offering he has forever perfected those who are being sanctified*. Let us put our trust in Christ, and His ability to perfect us by *one offering*, instead of denying His salvation by considering His sacrifice insufficient.

A few lines down, in Hebrews 10:17 and 18, another important promise is added, *Their sins and their transgressions I will remember no more. Once these have been forgiven, there is no further offering for sin*. Christ's sacrifice took care of our sins so completely that God is able to forgive them and to forget them. Where is Purgatory then? It is certainly not taught in the Bible! It teaches instead that when we trust our salvation to Jesus Christ who paid for them with one sacrifice, God forgives and forgets our sins. Those who try to get to heaven in some other way go to hell. The Bible knows no middle ground.

This wonderful truth calls for action! Why don't you pause for a moment, and thank God that Christ's one sacrifice was enough. Trust Him to save you, and believe His promise that God really will forgive you and forget all about your sins. *Once these have been forgiven, there is no further offering for sin*.