

Christians, Catholics, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses: What's the Truth?

Historical Christianity is built primarily on two foundations: Jesus is God and the inerrancy of the Bible. We can't be united if we are divided on these foundational issues. This article may help to better understand differences, and why we can't "just all get along"—although I wish we could.

We are encouraged to be at peace with all men, even with those who have different beliefs. But the Bible also encourages us to boldly and confidently present a scriptural basis for truth and compare differences ... to be peacemakers but not religious negotiators.

The Inerrancy of Scripture

- Roman Catholicism promotes submission to the teachings of the Pope, bishops and sacred traditions that often supersede Scripture. Traditionally, followers are not encouraged to read the Bible but to lean on Papal interpretation. The title "Vicar of Christ" implies that the Pope has the same power and authority that Christ has over the church.
- Mormons refer to the Bible, but look primarily to the Book of Mormon despite the fact that no geographical locations mentioned have ever been found (cf. 8th Article of Faith). We know where Jerusalem is, but we do not know where Zarahemla and Bountiful, nor any other location, are located. The challenge with believing both the Bible and the Book of Mormon is that Jesus Christ and Joseph Smith cannot both be right—they contradict each other at every turn. Mormon doctrine teaches that the inspired words of their living prophets become

Scripture; thus, superseding the Bible. After many years of saying, "I want to bear my testimony that I know this church is true ... I know our prophet is a true prophet of God," it becomes ingrained but rarely challenged.

- Jehovah's Witnesses, through The New World Translation, claim that their version of the Bible is scholarly and more accurate. However, the translators were not biblical scholars or theologians. David Reed, an ex-Witness, says that the New World Translation came into being in 1961 for the sole purpose of eliminating the deity of Christ. They also believe that Jesus and Michael, the archangel, are one and the same.
- Historical Christianity is built on the written word of God alone. The Protestant Reformation set the world ablaze with a hunger to return to the Word of God. Many who challenged Rome were killed because of this. The Bible is our infallible rule of faith, being sufficient to give us the sure knowledge of the gospel: "All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). We cannot add or subtract.

Redemption Through Christ Alone

- Roman Catholicism teaches that Mary was free of sin. She is a co-redeemer to assist in redemption. A bumper sticker reads, "Can't find Jesus, look for His mother." Instead of teaching believers to rest in Christ by faith alone, Catholics often promote Mary worship and works to "merit grace." Catholics remain dependent on the "Church," even after death, to relieve suffering in Purgatory. Although sins are forgiven periodically in Confession, the punishment still remains.
- Mormons believe that God was once as we are, and is now an exalted man, and that men can become gods. The

prophet Joseph Smith refers to this as “the great secret” (Times and Seasons 5:613; Aug. 1844). Some try to backpedal away from this, but Mormon doctrine teaches it. They also assert that God’s marriage partner is our mother in heaven; we are their spirit children; good works are necessary for salvation. If it had not been for Joseph Smith and the restoration of truth, there would be no salvation. There is no salvation outside the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon Doctrine, p. 670).

- Jehovah Witnesses believe that salvation comes through works and not faith alone. Jesus Christ was a perfect man; a created being like us. According to John 1:1, in their Bible, Christ is “a god,” but not “the God.” They do not believe everything that Jesus claimed about Himself. The New World Translation and the Watchtower tracts systematically set out to eliminate evidence for the deity of Christ, trying to make Him a creature rather than the Creator.
- Historical Christianity teaches that Mary is highly favored, but not free from sin. She does not play a role in redemption. Any time we minimize Christ we are on very dangerous ground. Historical Christianity believes that Jesus is the only way, the only truth, and the only life. No one comes to the Father except through Him (cf. John 14:6). He is not a “god”; He is God. We are totally forgiven when we repent and confess Christ as Lord. No punishment remains (cf. Rom. 3:24-25). God the Father was never like us and we will never be like Him. This dangerous view exalts man. If a person claims that a “messenger of light” appeared to them with new truth, we should point them to Paul’s words, “Although if we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel to you than the one we have preached to you, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8).

Christ is the only Head of the Church. We do not need an additional mediator or priest; Jesus is our mediator and Priest (Heb. 4:15). We do not need to belong to any church, or society, to be saved. Again, salvation comes through Christ alone: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

We can stand before God because our sin debt is paid in full ... no intercessors, mediators, penance or works can add to Christ's finished work on the Cross.

Romans 10:9 states that "if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." This truth is true!

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