

# Why Christians Differ Doctrinally - Part XVIII.

## Overview

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[ 0 : 00 ] Several months ago, we began a series entitled, Why Christians Differ Doctrinally. And we were busily engaged in that in an ongoing fashion.

We left you in John's Gospel, Chapter 6, where we had intended to undertake the great subject of the substitutionary death of Christ as is set forth in his description of the blood and of the bread, Christ being the bread of life and so on.

And we were interrupted by my stint in the hospital. So I should like very much to return to that. But in order to do so, we will have to provide some necessary review, I think, to kind of bring you up to speed and refresh you as to what we were actually discussing.

The subject, why Christians differ doctrinally, can all be reduced to this one particular facet, and that is this. Christians differ doctrinally because they interpret the scriptures differently.

And that leads them to different conclusions, which, of course, produces different practices, different ideas, different emphases, and so on.

[ 1 : 25 ] It is predictable when you understand that man is flawed in his intellect. He is flawed in his capacity for thinking and concluding rightly simply because we are finite.

We are human. We reach some right conclusions and we reach some wrong conclusions. How can you tell them apart? The answer is simple.

Mine are all right. Yours are all wrong. It's as easy as that. Well, I'm being facetious, of course, but that's often the way it comes across. The old Quaker saying is, nobody is right except thee and me. And sometimes I'm not sure about thee. You know, it's very easy to develop an arrogant kind of attitude and believe that we have a corner on the truth and that everybody else is wrong.

And this actually leads some people to the, I think, unfortunate conclusion that there is no real truth. It's just whatever you want it to be. It's all subjective.

[ 2 : 32 ] All of religion and all of moral values are determined by subjective and personal preference and viewpoint.

And when you take that position, of course, of moral relativity, then nobody has to be wrong about anything. Everybody's right. Even though they may hold completely contradictory and diverse viewpoints, it's all a matter of personal opinion.

This is the political correctness that pervades our society today. And it suggests that there is no overarching value. There is no overarching authority that can dictate to all peoples everywhere at all time.

It is all as you see it. It's just a matter of personal preference, which, of course, suggests that the truth that we hold so dear doesn't even exist.

But we believe it does exist. The Bible speaks a great deal about truth and everything in connection with it. And Jesus Christ is described as the way and the truth and the life.

[ 3 : 43 ] You see, if there is no such thing as absolute truth, then there is no such thing as error. And there is no such thing as evil.

Because if good does not exist, there is no basis for evaluating evil. Make no mistake about it.

There is truth and there is error and there is good and there is evil.

And they are clearly revealed in Scripture. And if we open our eyes, they are clearly revealed by what transpires around us.

So, in looking at this subject, it is very involved and we are simply skimming the surface. But it is important for Christians to understand why they believe what they believe.

And we have been emphasizing this at our men's class on Thursday morning. We need to understand the rationale for our belief. If all you can come up with is, I believe this because that's what my church teaches.

[ 4 : 47 ] Or I believe this because this is the way I was raised. Then you are in a sad state of affairs. You need to be able to say, I believe this because I have examined the evidence that is involved.

And I have concluded that this is true. And this is why I believe it. This is the only logical, philosophical, rational basis for believing anything about anything.

Is that you are convinced that it is true. It corresponds to reality. That's why we are to believe what we are to believe.

When we talk about Christians who differ and doctrinal differences, we need to understand that we are not speaking per se about different concepts of salvation.

Although that will come into play as we see when we get into John chapter 6. But we are talking about honest, legitimate differences that Christians have about doctrine, about values, norms, and standards, and so on.

[ 5 : 51 ] Why are there so many differing points of view about this? Why can't we zero in on something and agree on that? Why all the different denominations?

Why do all of these exist? How and when did they all begin? And why? And I'm not going to pursue that, but I did tell you that there are excellent resources available now in bookstores and libraries.

In fact, you can even get this online. You don't have to go to a bookstore or library. And you can there research the beginning or the origins of virtually every Christian denomination that exists.

When and where it began. Who the principal founders were. All the details about it. Why they founded it as they did. And so on. All of that information is there and available to the public.

All of these different denominations that exist today, including those who are non-denominational, as is Grace Bible Church.

[ 6 : 59 ] They all began by their respective leaders having reached different conclusions as to what the Bible means.

And it is important to note. I suspect that behind and in the minds and hearts of all of these people, there was a sincere, earnest desire to pursue the truth.

And they really believed that this was the way that God was leading them. This was the information that God was revealing to them. That's why they took the positions they did.

However, I want to offer this caveat. And that is, alas, an earnest mind and a sincere heart is no guarantee that you will arrive at the truth.

It would be kind of nice if all we had to do was have good intentions and sincere motivation.

[ 8 : 01 ] And that would guarantee that what we arrived at would be the absolute truth. But it does not work that way. Truth is what it is. And it is not determined by your having good intentions or sincerity or even really wanting the truth.

Now, if you really want the truth, the likelihood is that you're going to find it more than not. But simply being sincere in your motivations does not guarantee that what you arrive at is true.

All of these various denominations, doctrinal positions, etc. All of them, I think, without exception, claimed scriptural authority for their conclusions.

But their conclusions were very different. Was God telling one person one thing and another person the opposite? And yet they were both true?

That's nonsense. Were these godly men who formulated these positions? I would say probably for the most part, yes.

[ 9 : 05 ] They were men who knew and loved Jesus Christ, who believed in the authority of the word of God and wanted to please God. But again, these noble desires and ambitions are no guarantee that what you reach is the truth.

Do you realize that in the 1400s and 1500s, and we're only talking 500, 600 years. Now, so far as our lifespan is concerned, 500 or 600 years is a long time.

But when you're talking about human history, or even if you're talking about church history, 500 years is not that long. It's just five quick centuries.

So, 500 years ago, do you know that there were no Lutherans? Did you know there were no Presbyterians? They didn't even exist.

There was not such a thing as a Methodist, or a Nazarene, or an Episcopalian. They didn't even exist. They had never come into being.

[10:09] These are relatively late insofar as their origin is concerned. They all surfaced much later. Lutherans had their Martin.

And do you understand that when Martin Luther took the positions that he took and wrote his 95 Thesis and posted them on the church at Wittenberg, do you think for a moment that Martin Luther was saying, as of now, I'm placing the Roman Catholic Church, of which I am a priest, on notice that I am beginning a new denomination, and it's going to be called Lutheran.

The furthest thing from his mind. Martin Luther had no intentions of starting the Lutheran Church. All he wanted to do was reform the church of which he was a priest and a member.

He had no desire to form a new denomination called Lutherans, or to be the head of what would become known as a Protestant faction.

Furthest thing from his mind. All he wanted to do was bring some reformation, some cleansing, some purging, to the Roman Catholic Church, which he dearly loved and to which he had committed his entire life.

[11:33] And we may say the same about a number of others. John Knox, who is commonly referred to as the father of Presbyterianism, was a Scot, but he had no intention originally of forming a Presbyterian church.

That's just something that evolved later on. John Wesley. John Wesley was an Episcopal priest. And out of the Episcopalian movement, eventually came forth the Methodist Church.

It was part and parcel of that when he was proclaiming the gospel throughout this country. And the Episcopalians did not exist until King Henry VIII was unable to obtain an annulment from the Pope. Of course, King Henry VIII was a member of the Roman Catholic Church and was the head of the Church of England, or the head of the State of England, of Great Britain. And when the Pope refused to give him an annulment, of course, divorce is out of the question for Roman Catholic theology, but he applied for an annulment and the Pope would not give him an annulment.

And to make a long story short, King Henry VIII says, Well, so much for that. We will just withdraw from the Roman Catholic Church. We'll form our own church.

[12:59] I will be the head of it. And it will be called the Episcopal Church or the Church of England. And it was out of that Church of England in the 1700s that the societies were formed by John Charles Wesley that later became the Methodist Church.

And this was later in the... Actually, it was... By then, it was practically into the 1800s. And out of the Methodist Church came the Nazarenes.

Nazarene is a large denomination. I don't know how many members... It has a couple of million members at least throughout the United States. But the Nazarenes didn't even come into existence as a denomination until the 1900s.

And so with the Church of God of Anderson, Indiana, there's a Church of God in Cleveland, Tennessee. One is Holiness and the other is Pentecostal. Neither of these even existed until into the 1900s.

How or why did they come into existence? Because... And it's the same for all of these. Because there were individuals who arrived at what they believed was an interpretation of Scripture.

[14:11] They had dynamic, forceful personalities. They had teaching skills and skills to convince. Many of them were charismatic personalities. And they were very convincing, very compelling.

And they presented their findings from Scripture as they had studied it. And there were people who signed on to it. And the numbers grew. And they grew.

And they grew. And they became organized. And you have what we have today as denominations. They just kind of evolved or morphed into existence through a set of, I think, understandable circumstances and people responding to issues as they were affected in their culture and in their time and what the demands were and all the rest of it.

Plus, that coupled with the fact that there are a lot of people who just flat out don't get along with a lot of other people. So there are personalities injected into this.

And sometimes denominations or even churches split and splintered because somebody couldn't get along with somebody else. There were personality clashes.

[15:23] You throw all of those things into the mix and you end up with what we've got today, which is a kind of a hodgepodge. All of these surface pretty much from the same kind of beginnings.

And I would say that their only commonality, for the most part, was their sincerity and their good intentions. And I don't think that there was a one of these, I don't think there was a one of these,

that would not have insisted that God was leading them to do what they were doing. And I suspect that in some cases God was, and I suspect in some cases he wasn't. And it's impossible for us, with our finite minds, to sort out who exactly was led of the Lord and who was not. So, how have we treated this, or what have we arrived at by way of a conclusion, insofar as the interpretation of Scripture is concerned?

And it is simply this. I have concluded, and I'm not alone in this, there are many others who feel the same way, but I feel very, very strongly about this.

[16:46] And that is, that no mere human individual has the ability, or has the capacity, to arrive at a true, solid interpretation of Scripture.

Period. We don't have it in us. I care not how brilliant an individual is, or how high their IQ. We simply do not have the ability to interpret the Word of God in a way that we can declare our finding, or our interpretation, to be absolutely, completely true to the revelation that God has given.

And I feel very, very strongly about that. I feel that Lutherans don't have it, Presbyterians don't have it, Methodists don't have it, and Baptists don't have it.

And neither do the non-denominational churches, of which Grace Bible Church is one. None of us possess the ability to really accurately interpret Scripture.

Then, who does? The one who does is the one who gave the Scripture. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and God is the only viable interpreter of Scripture.

[18:17] Well, how does that work? Well, it doesn't work like some think that it does. Some think that when you come to a passage of Scripture, and you're trying to determine the meaning of it, and it's a perplexing passage, and you're trying to get a handle on it, so you can proclaim the truth of it.

How do you know what this passage means? Some say, it's very simple. I just pray about it, ask God for the meaning of the revelation, and God gives it to me, and that's what I preach.

That really sounds spiritual. But I've been there and done that, and it doesn't work. It doesn't work that way.

You do not simply pray and ask God for the meaning of a passage of Scripture, and then be assured that whatever it is He communicates to your mind is from Him, and that's the meaning of it. Sometimes I wish it worked that way. It would be a whole lot easier and a lot simpler, and it would be a lot more confidence-producing that you were actually speaking from God.

[19:21] The only authoritative interpreter of Scripture is the Scriptures themselves. And that is why the Bible is its own best commentary.

And when you want to know what a verse in 1 Corinthians or Romans or Exodus or whatever, when you want to know what that verse means, what you've got to do is allow all of the rest of the Bible to interpret it for you.

Well, how do you do that? You interpret Scripture by using Scripture, comparing Scripture with Scripture, and we will see how this works in a very practical way.

Perhaps we won't get there today, but we will in the upcoming sessions, where you allow the Bible to give you its own meaning. And that's the only meaning or interpretation in which, personally, I can have any confidence at all.

The tendency is for each of us, and I think this is just ingrained within our human ego, the tendency is for us to have a pet position or conclusion that we have reached regarding some doctrine, and then we come to the Bible and we look for verses to support it.

[20:38] And that's all wrong. It's a natural thing to do, but it's all wrong. What we are to do is to come to the Bible first, see what it has to say on this particular issue, then formulate your position on the basis of that.

So that the Scripture, the Scriptures are determining the position or the doctrine that you hold, rather than you holding the doctrine and coming to Scripture and looking for support.

And this is a natural tendency. I think we all have an ingrained tendency to want the Bible to say what we want it to say. And that's the thing you have to guard against.

Preachers especially have to guard against that. The worst thing that I can do is preach to you Marvin Wiseman's conclusions and positions and then say that they are from God.

That's a terrible, terrible thing to do. And every preacher ought to bend over backwards to make sure that he doesn't do it. When we say, Thus saith the Lord, we need to make sure that the Lord is saying that.

[ 21 : 55 ] Because there are certain things that God says, and that's what God says. Then there are things that man says God says. And God doesn't say that at all.

It's just man saying that God says. And there is a very subtle, but a very dangerous distinction. You have got to be able to leave this place saying, Well, we didn't get Marv's take, or Marv's position, or Marv's doctrine.

We got what the word of God has to say. That is my lifelong ambition. You cannot afford Marv's position.

And you shouldn't have to be burdened with it. And I'm constantly trying to divorce my thinking and my position from that of scripture. Because it's very easy sometimes to get them commingled.

So, only the scriptures themselves are authoritative to interpret themselves. And scripture seldom speaks its mind in any one place.

[ 23 : 09 ] What does that require? Scripture seldom speaks its mind or its whole mind in any one passage of scripture.

That necessitates you're going to other passages of scripture. scripture. This is the value of a concordance. A concordance will reveal to you by way of words what word is used in the Bible and where it is used from Genesis to Revelation.

Many, for instance, are puzzled at the idea that the book of Genesis is one of the most beneficial commentaries in all of the Bible on the book of the Revelation.

The book of Daniel is a magnificent commentary on the book of Revelation. You cannot understand the book of Revelation apart from the book of Daniel.

It comments on it. It supports it. It elucidates it. It illuminates it. And you need all that it has to say in order to get a full picture.

[ 24 : 31 ] So, all of the Bible is a commentary on all of the Bible. It's all interconnected and interrelated. This is why it is put together in the way it is so as to require our diligent study.

This is why there is no bottom in this book. There's no end to it. It is infinite in its content, in its explanation, in the implications.

It just goes on and on and on and on. After all, it is from a God who is infinite. So, what should you expect? That means you...

That's like someone reading the Bible. They congratulate themselves because they have read the Bible, every chapter, every verse, from Genesis to Revelation. Now, I know everything that's in the Bible.

Ha! You're not even close. It is commendable to read the whole thing from Genesis to Revelation.

[ 25 : 35 ] I recommend it. But the Bible isn't like a novel. You read it once and you got everything and you know who did what and when. It's not like that. This incredible document is put together in such a way that I don't care how many years you spend studying it, you never get it all.

You never get it all. You'll get what you need for where you are when you are there, but you're not going to get it all. It's a book that has no bottom. And it is put together in such a way that in order to appreciate any given passage, you've got to bring to bear all the rest of the scripture testimony to bear.

And when you do, the subject just becomes more and more and more enlightened and you develop a greater and greater appreciation for God and who He is and what He has done and all about Him. It is part and parcel of growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Just absolutely incredible.

Now I want to speak for a moment about, and I'm using this example between Roman Catholics and Protestants and I hope nobody gets the impression that I am Catholic, that I am bashing Roman Catholics.

[ 26 : 57 ] That is not my intent at all. And just let me say, I'm sure there is a multitude of genuinely heaven-bound, born-again people in Catholic churches, Roman Catholic churches all over the country.

And nobody is going to hell because they're a Roman Catholic. And nobody is going to hell because they are a Protestant. But a personal relationship to Jesus Christ is what really matters, whether you're a Catholic Protestant or whatever.

That's the thing that matters. So I'm not interested. I'm not interested in bashing or dismantling the Roman Catholic Church. I'm using it as an example because, and the reason I'm doing so, is because we're talking about why Christians differ.

And I do not think there is a greater or more obvious disparity in doctrinal positions than that which exists between Roman Catholic and Protestant.

And I just want to give you a couple of examples of how I suspect they reached some of the conclusions that they did with which we do not agree. But, I don't have any difficulty at all seeing how they reached that conclusion.

[ 28 : 09 ] Nor do I have any problem in assigning a good motive to these. I do not believe that these were evil people trying to lead multitudes astray. I believe their heart was probably in the right place, at least most of the time, given the fallen nature that we all have.

But I know also that whether you were Catholic or Protestant, you have a predisposition to want to reach the conclusion that you want to reach. We are all like that.

Every one of us. Not just in religious matters, but in other issues, moral or whatever. And it's a scary thing to realize that we can justify and rationalize almost anything we want to do or any position that we want to hold.

So, I am using this as an example because it contains probably the greatest distinction. And when we are talking about why Christians differ doctrinally, I would just say this too.

There are Protestants who do not even consider Roman Catholics as Christians. And there are Roman Catholics who do not even consider Protestants as Christians.

[ 29 : 18 ] And I'm using this term Christian in a broader sense. So, what I am using here is an illustration that I hope will just enlighten you.

And I'm not talking necessarily about limiting ourselves to those who have a personal relationship with Christ. I'm just talking about the generic term Christian and in that sense, all Roman Catholics are Christians.

All Protestants are Christians. Although there are phonies in both groups and there are genuine in both groups. So, I trust that I made myself clear that way.

Protestants were so named because they protested against the practices and the positions of the Roman Catholic Church.

They were then called Protestants, but we have since changed it with the accent on a different syllable and we call them Protestants. But when you use the word Protestant, it really brings out the idea of protest much more clearly than it does if you say Protestant.

[ 30 : 24 ] Protest gets lost in Protestant, but it is found in Protestant. So, Protestants were actually what they were. And, when they protested, because these Protestants, and by the way, I want to make this very clear, the original Protestants were, of course, in the Roman Catholic Church, and were part and parcel of it.

And they dearly loved the Church, and they were agonizing and deeply concerned over the direction that the Church was taking during their lifetime.

They saw it as contrary to Scripture, they saw it as contrary to the best interests of the flock, they saw these Ecclesiastes, these individuals who were in the Roman Catholic hierarchy, including the Pope, they saw them as individuals who were taking the Church in a direction that God never intended it to go.

And they were deeply concerned. They wanted to turn things around. They wanted to bring reform. They wanted to bring changes. They wanted to align things more with the Scripture.

However, their protestations were, for the most part, ignored or condemned. And one of the reasons they were was because they were protesting against an organization, the Roman Catholic Church, they were protesting against an organization that held itself to be infallible, incapable of wrong decisions, or wrong doctrinal direction.

[ 32 : 14 ] Well, if the Church is infallible, and the Pope is infallible, and their pronouncements are as the word of God, then what validity does that give to those who are protesting against it?

None, whatever! how dare they criticize what is going on in this infallible institution that God has established, and the Pope, who is the head of it, how dare they protest?

And they were looked upon as rebels, as heretics, as troublemakers, as people who wanted to just bring the Church to wreck and ruin.

And many of them, perhaps most of them, were excommunicated. That means they were simply kicked out of the Church. They were defrocked of their priestly position, and they were branded as heretics, and if you know anything about Roman Catholic Church, or Roman Catholic theology, if you are not a member of the Roman Catholic Church, there is no salvation for you.

You are doomed to hell for eternity. And if you were at one time a Roman Catholic in good standing, and you have been excommunicated, you are consigned to hell forever.

[ 33 : 40 ] That's it. There is no hope for you. Now, if you really believe that, and you're excommunicated, that's going to ruin your whole day.

Can you see the power that was vested in this ecclesiastical institution? It was awesome. Kings and queens trembled at the thought of not being in good standing with the church. Because they held your eternal destiny in their hands. And you had better be obedient. Intimidation was tremendous. Influence was very, very far reaching. Something that we can't even begin to identify with. And the Roman Catholic Church, for the most part, does not have that kind of sway today.

[ 34 : 50 ] But they did back in this time when we were talking about. You better believe they did. And commingled with that religious hierarchical authority often went a certain amount of political authority and political clout.

And they used that too. And they did not because they were Roman Catholics, but they did because they were human beings who just saw an opportunity and they took advantage of it the same way human beings have always done down through the years.

So, virtually all of those who were referred to as reformers were Roman Catholic clerics, monks, priests, etc.

And today, the Roman Catholic Church, today, considers them and considers you and me. You know what they call us? Well, they call us Protestants, that's true.

But what they, our official name is, we are the separated brethren. And they still view, unapologetically, they still view the ancient Roman Catholic Church as the only true, viable church of God in existence.

[ 36 : 14 ] That's how they regard themselves. And if you ask any priest, he will be quick to tell you that. The Roman Catholic Church is the only legitimate God-ordained church in the world.

Now, granted, Roman Catholics, guess what? They have their liberals and their conservatives, conservatives, just like Protestants do. And there are Roman Catholic priests today, there might even be some cardinals, I don't know, if there are cardinals and they believe this, they are closet cardinals, I can promise you that, who believe that, oh, there are going to be plenty of Protestants in heaven.

You don't have to be a member of the Roman Catholic Church in order to go to heaven. There are priests today who believe that, but do you know how they are regarded by the greater body of Roman Catholic priests as real leftists, as real heretics, and as out of step with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

So there are lots of Catholics today who are in line with Catholic doctrine, and there are lots of Roman Catholics who are not in line with Roman Catholic doctrine.

Every Catholic woman who is on the pill is flouting the authority of Rome, whether they realize that or not. They are, because that's contrary to what the Church teaches.

[ 37 : 47 ] Perhaps the greatest distinction as regards Catholicism, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism in general, has to do with the concept of personal salvation.

And I want to address this just a moment, and we'll go to John chapter 6 and see the real seed for this, I think. And that is, in the Roman Catholic Church, this is a great area of distinction, and I don't know a lot about this first hand, but my late wife Barbara told me a lot about it because she was born and reared in the Roman Catholic Church, as were all of her family, and her mother was one of twelve children, strong Italian Roman Catholic family, and she told me about a number of these things, and in the Roman Catholic Church, salvation is realized, personal salvation is realized via, the sacraments.

That means, you place yourself in good standing before God, and as a good member of the Roman Catholic Church, and as one who receives the grace of God through the sacraments that God has provided.

And as you participate in the sacraments, grace is added unto you via those sacraments. And the first one that we would merely list is water baptism.

This is usually administered to a baby. And when the baby is water baptized by the priest, it is believed that original sin in which the baby was born is removed through the holy water.

[ 40 : 00 ] And the application of that water to the baby removes from it original sin. That enables the baby to go to heaven. Because if it isn't baptized, and by the way, when the baby is baptized, that also introduces it into the Roman Catholic Church.

becomes a member of the Church and has original sin removed. And if a baby dies, never having been baptized or admitted to the Roman Catholic Church, then the baby is consigned to what in their theology is called limbo throughout the duration to come.

This is not heaven, and it is not hell. it is limbo. It is a place where all unbaptized babies go at death. Now, there is not a shred of anything in Scripture to justify that.

But it is a position that is officially held by the Roman Catholic Church. Now, you will find priests today who don't believe that. But that's simply because they are out of step with their own official doctrine.

This is what their official doctrine adheres to. So, there is that sacrament. And then there is the sacrament of confirmation.

[ 41 : 25 ] This usually happens with the infant's first communion, the baby's first communion, somewhere around the age of six or seven. They take their first communion. And this is the Eucharist.

When the priest consecrates the elements, turns them into the actual body and blood of Christ, and you receive the wafer that is receiving Christ.

So, when we talk about receiving Christ, Roman Catholics talk about receiving Christ, but it's two different things. We talk about receiving Christ as an act of your will and as an element of your faith and trust in him.

Now, they do not believe that that is absent, but they believe that you also receive Christ by mouth and the wafer. And Christ is in you because you have ingested him into your body and he becomes part of you.

And the basis for this teaching is in John's Gospel, chapter 6, where Christ said, except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

[ 42 : 34 ] Well, what in the world does that mean? That sounds like cannibalism. And the Jews were taken aback by this when Christ said that. They said, what is he talking about?

How can this man give us his flesh to eat? And the verses go on and said, this is a hard saying. In other words, I don't think I can swallow this.

This is too much. And we are told that many of his disciples went back and walked with him no more. They bailed out. They said, hey, this guy is too far off the wall for me.

Eating his flesh and drinking it, this is grotesque. This is crazy. What's he talking about? I don't want anything to do with this. And they departed. But if you take that, follow me now, if you take that very literally, eating his flesh, drinking his blood, and if you do not, you have no life in you, how are you going to handle that?

what? Well, they came up with a very interesting and creative way, and it's very satisfying to them, and they do it every day, and it's called the sacrifice of the mass.

[ 43 : 59 ] It is the heart and soul of Roman Catholicism, and it is presided over by a priest, and inherent in that, is tied to the salvation of the individual who participates.

And this is all done with very sincere motives, with a complete convincing of conscience, and these are not bad people.

Don't make them out to be bad, evil people. They are people who are following their conscience as they understand the issue. We just don't believe that their understanding is correct. But that doesn't make them evil people.

It just makes them, in my estimation, misguided and uninformed. Now, of course, what would they say about me? Same thing.

I'm misguided and uninformed. And what you have to do to decide which is misguided and which is uninformed is the study of the Scriptures.

[ 45 : 00 ] Well, they study the Scriptures, and guess what conclusion they come to? Same one they hold. I study the Scriptures, guess what conclusion I come to? Same one I hold.

But they're contradictory. Now, our relative friend would say, isn't it wonderful that they're both right? And any logician worth his salt is going to say, hey, they may both be wrong.

Both of them may be wrong, but there is no way in the world that both of them are right because they are mutually contradicting. You cannot operate on the basis of sanity and hold contradicting

positions to both be correct.

It's impossible. However, today's relativists seem to find a way to do everything, and that is just absolutely amazing. So, in addition to water baptism administered to babies and confirmation, then there is confession and penance.

And confession is when you go to the confessional booth and you confess your sins. Now, admittedly, Roman Catholics, for the most part, are not really into this nearly as much as they were a generation or two ago.

[ 46 : 24 ] And it is not unusual at all today to talk to a Roman Catholic who says, I haven't been to confession for three years. And they don't consider it a big deal. Now, officially speaking, insofar as the church is concerned, it is a big deal.

It is a big deal because if something should happen to you and you die with a mortal sin on your soul that is unconfessed, you are a goner.

I mean, for eternity. They make a distinction between venial sins and mortal sins. A venial sin needs to be confessed and it just means that you are ornery.

But a mortal sin, well, even the word mortal has mortality connected with it. If you commit a mortal sin, it can be and will be forgiven if you go to confession and confess it.

But if you die with a mortal sin like adultery or murder or something like that on your conscience and it has not been confessed to the priest, you do not even go to purgatory.

[ 47 : 41 ] You do not pass go. You go right straight to hell. That's it. And that's your eternal destiny. Confession becomes very, very important.

That's the only way you rid yourself of sins and stay up to date with God. So, confession is a very important thing.

And then penance, of course, has to do with the penalty or the payment that you make for having committed the sin.

And that's the category and the prerogative of the priest. And the priest may say, well, you confess your sins. Father, I confess that I have sinned and you're behind this little veil and the priest hears your confession.

Confession. And I want to emphasize, all of this is done with the best of good intentions and sincerity. And these people are very serious about this.

[ 48 : 42 ] We just believe that they're misguided, but they don't. And they are following their conscience as they see these things to exist. And when you go to confession, the priest, and you confess your sins, the priest may assign as a penance.

All right? You've got 200 Our Fathers. What does that mean? That means that you have to recite the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be that 200 times. That's your penalty. Or, the Hail Mary's. Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, and so on. Blessed art thou and blessed is the fruit. And you have to repeat that. And one of the ways that helps them to keep track of how much penance they have done is the rosary.

Because the rosary has all of these beads on it. And when you say in Our Father, you click off another bead, and when you go all the way around the ring of beads, and you know you've done so many Our Fathers, or so many Hail Mary.

[ 49 : 51 ] That's your penance. And once you do that, then you are considered as having paid for your sin. And again, we say, well, where in the world do you get that in Scripture?

Well, there isn't any place in Scripture that you get it. But most religious groups, almost all religious groups, do not formulate their doctrines and their conclusions on the basis of Scripture alone. They have other baggage, other traditions, other convictions, etc., that don't have anything to do with Scripture, and sometimes we wonder how they creep in. But they creep in because there were influential individuals who pressed those things forward and got them in at the time, and they were adopted and accepted as valid, and they've been in place for hundreds and hundreds of years. And then, the Eucharist, when you receive Christ by mouth, marriage is another of the sacraments, and holy orders is another.

Holy orders simply involves the induction into the priesthood. And when a young man wants to become a Roman Catholic priest, he goes to school and he goes to seminary, the Roman Catholic seminary, and then the time comes when he is inducted into the Roman Catholic Church as an official priest, priest, and he takes his holy orders, whereby he pledges to God chastity, poverty, and

whatever the third one is, I cannot recall.

[ 51 : 33 ] That's holy orders. And then the last, there are seven sacraments. The last is extreme unction. And if you've ever seen a Roman Catholic priest hurrying to a hospital or to the scene of an accident, it is usually because some family member has notified him that one of their parishioners or fellow Roman Catholic has a life-threatening situation and he may not make it and the priest wants to get there because as long as he is alive, he can administer to him extreme unction, hear his last-minute confession, and if he has mortal or venial sins on his soul, he can confess them to the priest, and then it is that much less that he has to suffer in purgatory for when he dies, or be able to avoid eternal hell by having confessed his sins to a priest with extreme unction and so on.

Now, all of these things are referred to as sacraments, and it is salvation via sacraments. You are saved on the basis of your participating in these sacraments.

We would say we are saved by grace, and they would say that's true. And all of these sacraments are a manifestation of God's grace. So you see, it all depends on how you word this and how you phrase it.

A good Roman Catholic will be the first to admit you are saved by grace. We say, well, what's wrong with that? We believe that. We are saved by grace. But when you start probing and asking exactly what you mean, then it will come out that grace by which we are saved is administered and available only through these sacraments.

And you have to participate in these in order to be saved. So, our position is justification by faith alone.

[ 53 : 44 ] No sacraments. None. It is an act of the will whereby you place your personal faith and trust in Jesus Christ and who he is and what he did for you.

And when you do that, you are exercising faith, confidence, trust, reliance in the finished work of Christ, who he is and what he did, why it matters.

That results in the salvation of the soul. And that and that alone. It is sola gratia is by grace alone. It is sola fidei by faith alone.

And it is sola Christos by Christ alone. So, this is where we would differ. Now, when you come to John's Gospel chapter 6, and I only have enough time left to just read you the passage, we are going to see how the waters really become muddied, because it is difficult to deal with this passage of Scripture based on what it says in a literal fashion.

And I'm going to begin reading with John chapter 6 verse, and verse, well, let's begin with verse 47.

[ 55 : 12 ] Jesus said, Truly, truly I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life.

Your fathers, and this probably more correctly should be rendered, your forefathers, ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. Now, Jesus is talking about children of Israel when they came out of Egypt, which is undoubtedly several hundred years before the time that he has spoken of here. And then he says in verse 50, This is the bread which comes down out of heaven. And I cannot reach any other conclusion, and I may be wrong, maybe I'm reading into white spaces, but I think what Jesus was doing when he was saying this, was pointing to himself.

This, he's saying, this is the bread of God come down from heaven. What? His body? Exactly. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.

He's talking about his body, eat of his body, what is this all about? How does that work? I am the living bread that came down out of heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever.

[ 56 : 35 ] And the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh. Now, that causes some to read into it.

He's talking about communion. I don't think he's talking about communion at all because that isn't going to be administered until much later. What he is talking about is his sacrificial death on the cross.

It is my body, he is saying, that is going to provide life for the earth. And the Jews, therefore, in verse 52, quite predictably, they began to argue with one another, saying, how can this man give us his flesh to eat?

Jesus, therefore, said to him, now, it would have been okay if Jesus would have said, no, no, no, no, that's not what I meant. You've got it all wrong. Let me explain. Do you know what he does? He compounds the situation. He makes it even worse, really. Look at it. How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Jesus, therefore, said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of

the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in yourself.

[ 57 : 46 ] That is weird. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day.

For my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him. It is really hard to read that any other way than literally.

But he can't be talking about literally. Why not? Well, this is crazy. This is cannibalism. And you know, the Old Testament expressly forbids the eating of human flesh.

The Bible condemns cannibalism. Well, what does this mean? What is this? What is it? As the living father sent me and I live because of the father, so he who eats me, he also shall live because of me.

This is the bread which came down out of heaven, not as the fathers ate and died. He who eats this bread shall live forever.

[ 59 : 00 ] Now, that ought to tip us off about something. And it does. These things he said in the synagogue as he taught in Capernaum.

And therefore, many of his disciples, many of his disciples, these were people who had already signed on. These were disciples. They heard this and they said, this is a difficult statement. Who can bear this? What is this? He never said anything like this before. This is really. But Jesus conscious that his disciples grumbled at this, said to them, does this cause you to stumble? In other words, they say, you fellas really have a hard time with this, don't you? Oh, I tell you, well, I'm determined not to go over on my time and it's 1130 so I quit.

I'm not finished but I quit. And we will resume here in John 6 and I want you to see how the scriptures, not Roman Catholics and not Protestants, but how the scriptures interpret this passage and it is a beautiful thing.

[ 60 : 16 ] May we pray. Father, you are the depository of all truth and we are so grateful that you have been pleased to reveal yourself in your word and to reveal the truth in a way that can be understood and appreciated.

And we admit that there are times that the truth escapes us. There are times that we allow our own bias and prejudice to overshadow the truth.

and we pray that you will sensitize us to that and cause us to see the error of that way and to steer away from it.

Thank you for these people who are here today and for their willingness to examine these things and weigh them and thank you for just the privilege of being together as believers and focusing upon what you have revealed in Christ's wonderful name.

Amen.