

Are Catholics Lost in the Law? A Biblical Perspective

Throughout history, religious traditions have used structure to unify communities of faith, but when those traditions replace the truth of God's Word, they can lead people away from genuine faith. This was the case with the Pharisees and Sadducees in Jesus' time—religious leaders who upheld man-made laws and rituals above God's commandments. Their legalism became a stumbling block, preventing people from experiencing the freedom found in God's Word.

In much the same way, Catholicism has built a system of traditions that often overshadow or contradict Scripture. Jesus rebuked the religious leaders of His day for elevating human traditions above God's commandments, saying:

You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions. — Mark 7:8

This same warning applies today. Many Catholic doctrines and practices rely on church tradition rather than the teachings of Jesus and the apostles. By examining these traditions in light of Scripture, it becomes clear how far they have drifted from Biblical truth—and why returning to God's Word is essential.

One of the clearest examples is how the Catholic Church has modified the Ten Commandments. When comparing the Catholic Catechism to Scripture, there are undeniable discrepancies. The second commandment, which forbids the making and worshiping of idols, is removed entirely. Scripture says:

You shall not make for yourself a carved image... you shall not bow down to them or serve them. — Exodus 20:4–5

Yet Catholic practice includes the veneration of statues, relics, and images, directly contradicting this command. To keep the number at ten, the Church splits the commandment against coveting into two parts—one against coveting a neighbor's wife and the other against coveting a neighbor's goods. This structure is not found in the Bible and serves only to accommodate the omission of the idolatry commandment.

Furthermore, the Sabbath commandment is altered. The Bible says:

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. — Exodus 20:8

This clearly refers to the seventh day, Saturday. Yet the Catechism changes it to, “*Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day,*” shifting the observance to Sunday—a change not commanded by Jesus or the apostles but made later by church authorities.

The transformation from Sabbath (Saturday) observance to Sunday worship was a gradual process. Initially, early Jewish Christians still kept the seventh-day Sabbath in obedience to the Law, just as Jesus and the apostles did. Paul continued preaching in synagogues on the Sabbath (Acts 17:2, Acts 18:4), showing that Sabbath observance remained intact after Christ's resurrection.

However, after the first century, as the church grew in Gentile regions and sought to distance itself from Judaism—especially under Roman persecution—some Christians began gathering on Sundays to commemorate the resurrection. This practice was not meant to replace the Sabbath but became more prominent over time.

In 321 AD, Emperor **Constantine I** issued a decree that Sunday would be a day of rest for the Roman Empire:

On the venerable Day of the Sun, let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed.

This civil law aligned Sunday with the Roman day of sun worship ("**Dies Solis**"). Decades later, the **Council of Laodicea (363–364 AD)** took it further by banning Christians from observing the seventh-day Sabbath, stating:

Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday, but shall work on that day; but the Lord's day they shall especially honor.

The Catholic Church later admitted this change was made by church authority, not by Scripture:

*You may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday. — Cardinal James Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, p. 111*

The Catholic Church... by virtue of her divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday. — The Catholic Mirror, Sept. 23, 1893

Another major concern is the misuse and overuse of communion (the Eucharist). Jesus instituted this sacred act as a memorial—a meaningful moment of remembrance that reflects the gravity of His sacrifice on the cross:

Do this in remembrance of me. — Luke 22:19

However, in Catholicism, communion has become a daily ritual, performed at every Mass, sometimes multiple times per day. Rather than strengthening reverence, this repeated practice can dull the significance of the Lord's Supper. When something so sacred is repeated constantly, it often turns from meaningful to mechanical, losing its intended impact on the believer's heart and mind. Scripture teaches that Christ's sacrifice was once for all, not something to be re-enacted repeatedly:

For by a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. — Hebrews 10:14

Yet, the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation teaches that the bread and wine become Christ's literal body and blood and that each Mass is a re-presentation of His sacrifice. This undermines the finality and power of the cross. Furthermore, the Catholic Church restricts the ability to consecrate communion to ordained priests—contradicting the Biblical teaching of the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:9).

In addition, the Catholic practice of addressing priests as “**Father**” directly disobeys Jesus’ explicit instruction:

And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. — Matthew 23:9

Despite this, Catholic clergy are almost universally addressed as “Father,” elevating men into a title and spiritual authority Scripture reserves for God alone. Catholicism also teaches believers to confess their sins to a priest, even though the Bible instructs us to confess directly to God through Christ, our only mediator:

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. — 1 Timothy 2:5

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. — 1 John 1:9

Nowhere does Scripture teach that a priest is required for forgiveness.

Additionally, praying to Mary and the saints is common in Catholicism, even though Scripture is clear that worship and prayer belong to God alone:

You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve. — Matthew 4:10

Despite this, Catholics are taught to invoke Mary as a “Co-Redemptrix” and mediator, which stands in direct conflict with Scripture. Many of these doctrines were not just doctrinal evolutions but were **borrowed from other religions**, including **Buddhism** and **European paganism**. Catholic use of **rosaries**, **monastic orders**, **statues**, and **incense rituals** closely resembles Buddhist practices that existed long before Christianity reached the East. Early Christian missionaries to Tibet were shocked by the similarities.

Likewise, the process known as *interpretatio Christiana* led to the absorption of **pagan festivals** into church observances. The **Easter celebration** is named after *Ēostre*, a fertility goddess, and is aligned with spring festivals. **Christmas** was merged with the Roman feast of **Saturnalia**, and ancient pagan temples and altars were consecrated as Christian churches. The Holy Spirit did not inspire these, but rather strategic compromises that blurred the line between Biblical truth and cultural adaptation.

Jesus consistently pointed people back to the authority of God’s Word, not traditions, rituals, or church institutions. He said:

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. — John 14:6

Paul also warned about being deceived by religious philosophies:

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. — Colossians 2:8

Peter, whom Catholics regard as the first pope, emphasized that God's Word—not tradition—is the final authority:

For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. — 2 Peter 1:21

Nowhere do we find the apostles commanding the changes that later became embedded in Catholic doctrine. Instead, they pointed believers back to the purity of Scripture and a simple, powerful faith in Jesus Christ. The Catholic Church, much like the Pharisees and Sadducees, has layered man-made, artificial traditions on top of God's Word, resulting in confusion and spiritual bondage. The extra-Biblical books, altered commandments, misuse of communion, confession to priests, prayers to saints, and integration of pagan customs all depart from Biblical Christianity. Jesus came to free us from such burdens—not to reinforce them. He calls us to worship the Father in spirit and truth:

But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him. — John 4:24

The true path is not found in religious legalism or church tradition but in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, founded on the unchanging Word of God.