

Hidden History

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Part 1

Modern American schools are reluctant to teach anything even remotely related to Christianity because of pressure from the legal system, and political correctness. As a result, many younger Americans are largely ignorant of the events surrounding the Protestant Reformation. Consequently, they don't understand why there was so much fighting in Ireland in the 20th century. It is hard to solve religious disagreements when you aren't allowed to discuss the root cause.

The fundamental difference between the protestant churches and the Catholic Church comes down to salvation. Who forgives sin and grants salvation? Is it Jesus or the Catholic Church? It is an irreconcilable difference that divorced Protestants from the Catholic Church nearly 500 years ago. How this disagreement arose is hidden in history that is seldom taught in public schools.

The Church chose the name "Roman Catholic Church" for obvious reasons. It was centered in Rome; and it strove to be catholic. The word "catholic" means "universal." The Roman Catholic Church was striving to be the universal church, centered in Rome.

Unity, of course, is a good thing; but it is hard to achieve. There are three basic ways to achieve unity. The first is simply to kill everyone who disagrees. It is a method that has been used at various times throughout history, and is still in use today. The second way is to compromise. Unity can be achieved if all principles are sacrificed for the sake of getting along. The third method is the most difficult, rarely tried, and rarely successful. It is to calmly reason together.

The Roman church sought unity through compromise. Pagans had a hard time accepting the notion of an all-powerful god. They were accustomed to gods with specific duties. Neptune ruled the sea. Venus was the goddess of love. Venus could do nothing to protect a sailor from a storm at sea. Neptune couldn't help you find true love. Therefore, pagans prayed to different deities depending upon their needs.

Since it was hard to convince pagans that God could do it all, the church deputized some saints with specific responsibilities. If you need protection while traveling, you can pray to Saint Christopher—that's his specialty.

Pagans were used to praying to statues. They just couldn't get excited about praying to an invisible god. So, the statue of Jupiter, King of the Gods, was brought into the church and renamed Peter, because he is King of the Saints. Pagans were much more comfortable with this.

Of course, the Second Commandment forbids the worship of statues. The Catholic Church's solution was to delete the second commandment, and divide the Tenth Commandment into two commandments so there would still be 10.

In the fourth century, Emperor Constantine wanted to solidify the unity of the Roman Empire. People were worshipping on different days. The Roman emperor declared Sunday to be the legal day of worship in 321 A.D. because it is "the venerable Day of the Sun." Forty-three years later, in 364 A.D., the Council of Laodicea changed the Roman Catholic day of worship from Sabbath to Sunday to comply with this law. They rationalized this change by saying it was in honor of the Resurrection, not in honor of the Sun.

Protestants argue that the Roman Catholic Church does not have the authority to change two of God's Ten Commandments, but that's a topic for a different day. The worship of idols and the change of Sabbath is not what caused the Protestant Reformation. The Church made other changes to Christianity.

The Passover celebration not only points back to the redemption of God's people from captivity in Egypt, it also pointed forward to redemption of God's people from captivity in sin through the death of the Savior. The Passover Lamb that was slain represented Jesus, the Lamb of God. The blood on the doorposts that saved God's people represents Jesus' blood. The early Christians always celebrated the resurrection of Jesus in conjunction with Passover for obvious reasons. Separated from the Passover, Jesus' death would be nothing more than an unjustified execution without spiritual meaning.

The pagans, however, liked to celebrate an ancient spring festival called, "Easter," dedicated to the fertility goddess Ishtar. It involved fertility symbols such as rabbits, eggs, and chickens, timed to coincide with a particular phase of the moon. For the sake of unity, the Catholic Church chose to celebrate the Jesus' resurrection on Easter instead of Passover. Unlike Passover, Easter always falls on Sunday, so it conveniently complies with Constantine's Sunday law. Easter is a celebration of birth, and Jesus was re-born, so to speak, on a Sunday; so they could rationalize celebrating His resurrection on Easter instead of in conjunction with Passover by calling it a celebration of Jesus' rebirth.

But, like the worship of idols and the change of Sabbath, the celebration of Easter instead of Passover wasn't a big enough sacrilege to cause the Protestant Reformation, either.

The single most important thing that caused the Reformation was the blasphemous notion that one had to buy salvation from the Catholic Church. Salvation is a gift from God, not a commodity sold by the Church.

But, in order to sell salvation, the Church first had to take advantage of the Roman myth about what happens to people when they die. As long as people believed the Biblical description of death, they would know that the church could not control what happens to people when they die. So, the church had to replace the Judeo-Christian belief about death with a pagan myth. It was easy to do.

The Romans were comfortable with retaining old religious beliefs by simply giving the old belief a new name compatible with the new religion. Zeus, the Greek King of the Gods, became Jupiter, the Roman King of the gods. Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love became Venus, the Roman goddess of love. Hades, the Greek god of the underworld became Pluto, the Roman god of the underworld. Virtually every Greek god had a Roman counterpart.

The Roman belief regarding life after death was the same as the Greek belief. Only the names were changed. You might not be familiar with Roman mythology, so let's quote from Edith Hamilton's classic book, Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes, which was once required reading in high schools. It is part of the Hidden History now kept from students.

THE UNDERWORLD

The kingdom of the dead was ruled by one of the twelve great Olympians, Hades or Pluto, and his Queen, Persephone. It is often called by his name, Hades. It lies, the Iliad says, beneath the secret places of the earth. In the Odyssey, the way to it leads over the edge of the world across Ocean. In later poets there are various entrances to it from the earth through caverns and beside deep lakes.

Tartarus and Erebus are sometimes two divisions of the underworld, Tartarus the deeper of the two, the prison of the Sons of Earth; Erebus where the dead pass as soon as they die. Often, however, there is no distinction between the two, and either is used, especially Tartarus, as a name for the entire region.

In Homer the underworld is vague, a shadowy place inhabited by shadows. Nothing is real there. The ghosts' existence, if it can be called that, is like a miserable dream. The later poets define the world of the dead more and more clearly as the place where the wicked are punished and the good rewarded. In the Roman poet Virgil this idea is presented in great detail as in no Greek poet. All the torments of the one class and the joys of the other are described at length. Virgil too is the only poet who gives clearly the geography of the underworld. The path down it leads to where Acheron, the river of woe, pours into Cocytus, the river of lamentation. An aged boatman named Charon ferries the souls of the dead across the water to the farther bank, where stands the adamant gate to Tartarus (the name Virgil prefers). Charon will receive into his boat only the souls of those upon whose lips the passage of money was placed when they died and who were duly buried.

On guard before the gate sits Cerberus, the three-headed, dragon-tailed dog, who permits all spirits to enter, but none to return. On his arrival each one is brought before three judges, Rhadamanthus, Minos, and Aeacus, who pass sentence and send the wicked to everlasting torment and the good to a place of blessedness called the Elysian Fields.

Three other rivers, beside Acheron and Cocytus, separate the underworld from the world above; Phlegethon, the river of fire; Styx, the river of the unbreakable oath by which the gods swear; and Lethe, the river of forgetfulness.

Somewhere in this vast region is Pluto's palace, but beyond saying that it is many-gated and crowded with innumerable guests, no writer describes it. Around it are wide wastes, wan and cold, and meadows of asphodel, presumably strange, pallid, ghostly flowers. We do not know anything more about it. The poets did not care to linger in that gloom-hidden abode. ¹

Part 2

Because it was hard to teach the pagans what the Bible says about life after death, and since the Biblical view of death is incompatible with the sale of salvation, the Church found it expedient to keep the Roman mythology, and simply change the names.

Romans believed Charon took the souls of the dead to the adamant gate where Cerberus was the gatekeeper. So, the church taught that angels took the dead to the Pearly gates where Saint Peter is the gatekeeper.

Romans believed that, after passing through Erebus, judges would send the wicked to everlasting torment and the good to a place of blessedness called the Elysian Fields. Consequently, the Church taught that, before getting through the Pearly Gates, Christians had to pass through a place like Erebus called "Purgatory," where they were purged of their sins with torment proportional to their transgressions before getting into heaven. The people who weren't members of the church went straight to a Tartarus-like place called "Hell," where Satan ruled instead of Pluto, causing them to suffer eternal torment.

Romans believed that Charon would only let them into the Elysian Fields if the dead person paid the price of admission and was properly buried. That made it easy for Romans to accept the notion that one has to pay the Church and be buried in the churchyard to get to Heaven.

The Roman Catholic belief about what happens after death is nothing more than Roman mythology with the names changed.

¹ Edith Hamilton, 1942, **Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes**, http://www.all-art.org/world_literature/hamilton1.htm

This teaching gave tremendous power to the Church. The Church, not God, decides who is saved and who is lost. If the church excommunicates you, you can't be buried in the churchyard and are damned to Hell. This is how the church gained power over the European kings and princes. They were afraid to disobey the pope because, if they did, the pope could send them to Hell where they would suffer for eternity.

The Church controlled Purgatory, too. Priests could shorten the time your loved ones were spending in Purgatory by praying for them. But the priests (or dead saints) wouldn't pray for your loved ones unless you bought special candles from the Church, and burned them at the altar.

The Church could not wield this power without the adopting the Roman myth about what happens after death. They dared not let the people read what the Bible says about death because it is nothing like the Roman myth. In chapter 16, Luke records how Jesus mocked the Roman myth about Heaven and Hell when he told the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. Jews hearing this parable knew very well that people in Heaven could not talk to people in Hell or transfer water to quench thirst. They knew it was a silly pagan myth that dead people went to Heaven or Hell as soon as they die. Jesus compared this with how foolish it would be to wait for someone to come back from the dead to tell them about the coming judgment rather than listening to the warnings of the prophets. Furthermore, Jesus said that they would not listen even if Lazarus did come back from the dead. Then, to make the point even stronger, he did bring someone named Lazarus back from the dead; and just as Jesus said, they didn't listen to him!

John, chapter 11, tells what happened when Lazarus died and was resurrected. Jesus told his disciples that Lazarus had "fallen asleep," meaning he had died. He did not say Lazarus was in Heaven. When Jesus talked to Martha, she said she did not believe the Roman myth about death. She knew that Lazarus would remain asleep until the resurrection. Jesus told her she was correct, and then proved she was correct by resurrecting Lazarus.

The Bible is clear about what happens at death: The dead are unconscious until they are resurrected. In 1 Thessalonians 4, verses 13 – 18, Paul told the Thessalonians that the dead will sleep until Jesus returns. Revelation, chapter 20, describes the resurrection of the dead in detail as well. The Catholic teaching that people go directly to Hell, or indirectly to Heaven via Purgatory, when they die is based on Roman mythology, not the Bible.

The church was only able to sell salvation by teaching the people to believe the Roman myth about death. They could not do this if the people read what the Bible says about death. If people knew that the dead are peacefully sleeping, unconscious of anything going on in the world, they would not pray to dead saints or do what the priest says the saint wants them to do. If people knew there is no such place as Purgatory, they would not pay the Church to pray their dead relatives out of there. If they knew they would not go to Purgatory or Hell when they died, they would not buy Indulgences from the church to keep them out of there.

That's why the Catholic Church in the dark ages did everything it could to prevent people from reading the Bible. They claimed it was because the Bible is too difficult for ordinary people to understand. They claimed people need a priest to tell them what the Bible means. Since the priest will tell them what the Bible says, there is no need for people to read it for themselves.

The truth is that Catholic teachings are so far from the Bible that people would easily recognize the errors if allowed to read it. Martin Luther's great crime, in the eyes of the church, was to translate the Bible into German so common people could read it. In the process of translating it, it became clear to him that salvation comes by grace, through faith. It can't be purchased from the church.

That's why Luther was against the selling of Indulgences. It was the height of blasphemy for the Church to let people pay for their own sins before they committed them, and buy a guarantee of salvation. This license to sin was more than Luther could bear. He had to post his 95 theses on the church door.

Luther loved the Church as much as he loved God, so he tried to bring the Church back to God by showing the Church how her teachings differed from Biblical teachings. But the Church had become Babylon, drunk with power. Once the priests had been given the power to sell forgiveness of sins, they did not want to give it up.

Ultimately, the only way Luther and his followers could adequately protest the abuses of the church leadership was to leave. In response, the Catholic Church tried to restore unity by killing off all the heretics. That persecution just made it even clearer that the Roman Catholic Church was NOT God's visible presence on Earth.

So, that's the Hidden History that tells what the Protestants protest about. The different Protestant denominations may disagree about what kind of music should be played in church, or how the church should be organized, and other insignificant things; but they all agree on one thing. Jesus saves—not the Catholic Church, or any other church.

Part 3

In the first segment of this program we saw how the Roman Catholic Church adopted several pagan beliefs during the Dark Ages. The Church compromised basic Christian beliefs in order to conform to worldly customs and make it easier for pagans to convert to Catholicism. We paid particular attention to the Roman myth about what happens after death because it paved the way for the church to sell indulgences, which was the spark that finally ignited the Protestant Reformation. We read the section in Edith Hamilton's classic work on mythology and saw that the Catholic doctrine about death is simply the Roman myth with the names changed. Tartarus was renamed Hell, the Elysian Fields were called Heaven, and Satan played the role of Pluto. The idea that Satan was torturing dead souls in Hell allowed the Church to sell salvation and forgiveness.

We mentioned in passing that if people knew what the Bible says about life after death, the Church would not have been able to profit from this pagan belief about life after death. Unfortunately, this false doctrine is still taught by the Catholic Church today, and believed by many non-Catholics as well. So, let's set the record straight about what the Bible actually says about death.

Let's begin with John, Chapter 11, which deals with the death and resurrection of Jesus' friend, Lazarus.

Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick."

When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

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"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up."

His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

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On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

“Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

“Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

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Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance.

“Take away the stone,” he said.

“But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.”

Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”

So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”

When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

Let’s look at some key points. Jesus told his disciples, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.” He did not say, “Our friend Lazarus has gone to Heaven; but I am going to bring him back.” He did not say, “Our friend Lazarus has gone to Hell; but I am going to bring him back.” If Lazarus had gone to Heaven, and was enjoying unimaginable bliss, it would have been cruel of Jesus to bring him back to Earth. If Lazarus had gone to Hell, it would have been cruel for Jesus to let His friend be tortured there for four days before rescuing him. Jesus isn’t cruel. He knew that Lazarus was unconscious in the grave, and would remain so until his resurrection. Since he wasn’t enjoying the pleasures of Heaven, or suffering the torment of Hell, it didn’t matter how long Jesus waited before resurrecting him.

John tells us that His disciples replied, “ ‘Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.’ Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So then he told them plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead.’ ” Jesus didn’t lie. It would have been a lie to say that Lazarus was asleep if he had actually been awake in Heaven, Hell, or Purgatory. Jesus used the common, but ambiguous, Jewish term for death. He called it sleep. His disciples simply misunderstood, thinking He meant natural sleep when He meant the sleep of death. So He told them plainly what He meant.

Martha said, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” She didn’t say, “I know Lazarus is in a better place.” She was a well-informed Jewish girl. She knew what the Old Testament says about death. She knew what Jesus had told her about death. She knew her brother would remain dead, in the grave, until the resurrection.

When she said, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day,” Jesus did not correct her by saying, “No, he is already resurrected.” Instead, Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?” Notice that He said, “The one who believes in me **will** live.” He used the future tense. Lazarus was dead at the moment, but was going to live again at the resurrection. Then, when he lives again at the resurrection, he will never die again.

Furthermore, note what Jesus said is the condition for being resurrected in the future. “The one who believes in me will live.” He did not say, “The one who buys salvation from the Church will live.” If the common people had been allowed to read the Bible in their own language, they would have known their dead loved ones were

sleeping peacefully in their graves, awaiting the resurrection, and would not have given money to the church so that prayers would be said in their behalf.

Some members of the church at Thessalonica were concerned when Jesus did not return before some of them died. Paul told them what was going to happen in 1 Thessalonians, chapter 4, verses 13 through 18.

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Paul also refers to death as sleep twice in this passage, and doesn't feel the need to qualify the term. He knows that his readers will know that "sleep" means "death" without having to explain what he means. Furthermore, it is clear that resurrection is a group activity. He doesn't say that every church member who has died has already risen and is with God in heaven now. All the dead believers will be resurrected at the same time, and the living believers will join them immediately thereafter.

He ends the passage by saying that we should encourage each other by telling about a future resurrection. He does not say we should encourage each other by saying that our dead friends and relatives have already been resurrected and are already in Heaven.

Both of the Bible passages we have studied tell what happens to believers when they die. What happens to non-believers? In Revelation 20, verses 4 and 5 we read,

And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.)

There are two resurrections. Believers are resurrected first when Jesus returns. Non-believers are resurrected 1,000 years later. The book of Revelation goes on to explain that Satan and the non-believers are then destroyed in the Lake of Fire. Satan doesn't torment the wicked people in Hell the same way Pluto torments the wicked in Tartarus, as stated in the Roman myth.

So, don't worry about what your dead friends are thinking or experiencing now. They aren't thinking or experiencing anything. They are sleeping a dreamless sleep waiting for Jesus' midnight cry to wake them up.