



Who Is Jesus According to the Orthodox Church?

What does the Orthodox Church believe about Jesus? Before I began this study, I had no idea that there were so many different Orthodox churches. These churches are broken into two specific branches-- the Eastern Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox, (which is also known as the Coptic Church). As most of us are more familiar with Eastern Orthodox (which includes Greek Orthodox and Russian Orthodox, among many others), and as the two branches of Orthodoxy believe very similar things, my focus for this particular study will be the Eastern Orthodox Church.

The first thing we find as troublesome in the Orthodox Church is their belief in continuing divine inspiration. It is worded like this on the *Greek Orthodox Diocese of America's* website--

The Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, along with Sacred Apostolic Tradition are the divine Sources in which Almighty God revealed His Will and which the Church accepted as being the only depository for these truths.

So we can see from this that they believe that God has revealed divine truth not only through the scriptures but continues to reveal divine truth through their Church Fathers. They say that both the Bible and the words of church leaders through the years are equal, believing both to be divinely sourced.

This is foundational to the rest of the errors we will find in this church. As soon as we include (and rely on) any human's words for divine truth, we are going to end up in a very confused and erroneous state.

I just have to add something here that is relevant for us all at some level. While this belief is quite troublesome, since we know that the Canon is closed and God says we shall not add or subtract anything from the Bible (Revelation 22:18-19), we need to ask ourselves if we actually and personally believe this to be true? I ask this because so many now believe in revelation from God outside of His Holy Word. Whereas this used to be considered the highest of heresies, now it is a commonplace belief that God is still speaking personally to people. I do not believe scripture confirms this belief and that this belief is, in fact, a product of our culture that is steeped and overflowing in mysticism. While I won't go into this here, you can read more about what the Bible has to say about special revelation in this current age here at [this post](#).

A second concern regarding this church is their dependence upon the sacraments for salvation-

The sacred ceremony of Baptism with that of Chrismation and the ceremony of the Holy Eucharist with that of Confession are the sacred Mystera (sacraments) which every Christian should receive as an active communicant of divine Grace. There are three other sacraments: ordination, marriage, and unction. They are granted to man, but are not obligatory, if not so desired.

Just a note: *Chrismation* is the Orthodox term for what the Catholic Church would call "Confirmation". However there are some differences. While the Catholic Church's confirmation is based on the age of the participant ("the age of reason"), the Orthodox Chrismation is dependent upon events rather than age and generally happens after Baptism and before their first Holy Communion.

So what does the Orthodox Church think of Jesus? We can see that, just like in Catholicism, Jesus is not enough. What He did on the cross is unable to save us for all eternity. Something is needed from us. So here again, we see a religion of works. Man must DO something in order to be saved.

We know from scripture that this just isn't true--

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Third, and also from the same website listed above, we see their belief that the communion bread and cup is turned into the very body and blood of Christ--

The most awesome ceremony in the Orthodox Church is the Mysterion (sacrament) of the Holy Eucharist. This ceremony was instituted by Jesus Christ the day before His Crucifixion, as He enriched His Church forever with the Divine Gifts, His own Body and Blood. This ceremony of the Holy Eucharist is both His sacrifice for the salvation of man and a sacred mysterion. The Holy Eucharist is the seal of the proclamation of the communion with God. It is the only Sacrament offered by the Church in which the elements of bread and wine not only carry the Grace of God, as a mysterion, but are "changed" into and "are" the very Body and the very Blood of Christ, being a propitiatory sacrifice.

So again we see that Christ is, in essence, being continually crucified. Why the continual crucifying of Jesus Christ, when He has risen victorious over death? Not to mention how disturbing this belief is when you really take a moment to reflect on it. There is no way it is from God and it's certainly not found in the Bible anywhere. We are to hold communion *in remembrance* of Jesus's sacrifice (Luke 22:19; I Corinthians 11:24-25). Communion helps us to remember Christ's sacrifice--not to relive it (or for Him to relive it) over and over again. Jesus is not on the Cross! He has risen victoriously over sin and death and reigns on high, where He sits at the right hand of God! (Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 12:2)

Fourth--and this is seriously heretical--the Orthodox Church does not believe in the substitutionary death of Christ. They emphasize the medicinal value of the cross (to help man rather than to appease God's wrath). I first became familiar with this idea through an interview I watched with an Orthodox Priest. But I found this confirmation on the *Orthodox Church in America* website--

[Jesus] "paid the price," not in some legalistic or juridical or economic meaning. He "paid the price" not to the devil whose rights over man were won by deceit and tyranny. He "paid the price" not to God the Father in the sense that God delights in His sufferings and received "satisfaction" from His creatures in Him. He "paid the price" rather, we might say, to Reality Itself. He "paid the price" to create the conditions in and through which man might receive the forgiveness of sins and eternal life by dying and rising again in Him to newness of life (see Rom 5-8; Gal 2-4).

So they completely remove the concept that Jesus died to appease God's wrath. He, rather, died to "pay the price to Reality"...whatever that means. Do you see the danger in this? They don't like how God is portrayed in scripture, and so they change it. (I just have to add that much of what was written in this particular article sounded very biblical. It took me a bit of scrolling to get to this heretical understanding.)

But the Bible makes it clear that Jesus saved us from God's wrath--

And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. (I Thessalonians 1:10)

Other verses regarding this concept of God's wrath and Jesus satisfying it can be found in Romans 1:18; Romans 2:5; Romans 5:9; Ephesians 5:6; Colossians 3:6; I Thess. 5:9; and Rev. 6:17, 11:18, 15:7. I am sure this could be a study all on its own. But when all taken together, we know from scripture that Jesus most certainly was sacrificed to appease God's wrath.

And fifth, and finally, one of the biggest concerns I found regarding the Orthodox Church is a doctrine they call *Theosis*. I had never even heard this word before researching Orthodoxy. Here is how *OrthodoxChristianity101* defines it--

Theosis, a foundational concept in Orthodox Christian theology, encapsulates the profound journey of transformation and communion with God. Rooted in the belief that humanity is called to share in the divine nature, theosis emphasizes the process by which individuals are gradually divinized or deified through their union with God. This transformative journey unfolds through a life of prayer, asceticism, and participation in the sacramental life of the Church.

So we can see that they believe that the end goal for man is deification--that he/she will become a god. According to a video I watched, this process is likened to a ladder where the person is continually climbing and will not reach perfection until they go to heaven. (Although,

they never really are quite sure if they are worthy of heaven. And so there's really no guarantee they are even on the ladder. There is no assurance of salvation in a works-based religion).

How did the Orthodox church end up with this doctrine? It happens by taking a verse or two out of context and, instead of comparing scripture to scripture, something "new" is taught that is inconsistent with the whole of scripture. Interestingly enough, the Mormon religion uses the same verses to promote their belief that men will become gods, so perhaps we will take a closer look at these verses when we get to Mormonism.

And so we can see that there are several errors in the Orthodox Church which would render it a false religion. Could someone be saved and still attend an Orthodox Church? Perhaps. But they could never stay there as they read and study their Bible and compare what it says to what they are learning in their church.

I never fail to be amazed at how subtle and deceptive Satan is as he presents these "almost Christian" religions to the masses. *Almost but not quite*. As soon as a religion requires works it becomes a false religion. We know this clearly from scripture.

Now, let me add this: Just as in biblical Christian circles, there is a wide swath of beliefs and "flavors" of any specific religion. What I wrote here may not be what every priest believes. I tried to do my research carefully, using several different sources. But what I wrote here may not represent every Orthodox Church or every priest. I do believe it represents most of them.

I hope this will help you as you seek to witness to and converse with members of the Orthodox Church.

Bibliography and Resources on the Orthodox Church

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VIDEOS/AUDIO

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Ready to Harvest: Eastern Orthodox VS Oriental Orthodox

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Orthodoxy and Catholicism—Why the One Church Split

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