

CHRIST FELLOWSHIP'S VIEW ROMAN CATHOLICISM PART II - MARY

In [Part I - Differences](#), we covered four important differences: the Bible, spiritual authority, justification (how one obtains God's mercy) and the sacraments. If you have not read Part I, it would be wise to do so, because the discussion that follows will depend upon the views discussed there.

Christ Fellowship (CF) warmly welcomes those of Roman Catholic Church (RCC) background, even though our church embodies the biblical insights of the Protestant Reformation (see the separate article *A Short History of the Church*). You will never be asked to renounce Roman Catholicism or to repudiate your spiritual heritage. We do ask that you keep an open mind about what you learn from the Bible at CF. The Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth, just as Jesus promised (John 16:13).

The differences in viewpoint about Mary hinge on the issue of spiritual authority. As discussed in Part I, CF believes that the Bible alone is the final authority for all matters of faith and practice. The RCC takes the contrasting position that the Bible and apostolic tradition not contained in the Bible are the final authority for faith and practice. So, we ground our beliefs on what the Bible says, while the RCC bases its beliefs partly on the Bible and partly on what the Pope or various councils of the RCC (e.g. the Council of Trent or Vatican II) have proclaimed. As you will see, CF and the RCC part company at the boundary of what is revealed in the Bible and what is not.

AREAS OF AGREEMENT

There is agreement between CF and the RCC in relation to those things explicitly revealed about Mary in the Bible. In short, there is agreement that Mary was a spiritually-minded young woman who gave birth to Jesus while still a virgin (Luke 1:27, 34). The conception of Jesus came about through the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35 and Matthew 1:21).

One can only admire Mary's godly response to the shattering news of what was to come: "'I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered. 'May your word to me be fulfilled'" (Luke 1:38a). We can learn lessons from Mary's faith just as we can from the faith of others such as Paul, Joseph, David or Moses.

AREAS OF DISAGREEMENT

There is a very simple way to understand the profound differences between CF and the RCC in relation to Mary. The net effect of RCC doctrines about Mary is to make her an object of worship on a level similar to Jesus. This worship finds its source in her role as "Mother of God." While RCC theologians will formally deny such equivalence of worship between Mary and Jesus, in practice this is the way Mary is treated. This explains why Roman Catholics are taught to pray to Mary and through Mary.

Contrary to RCC doctrine about Mary, it is crystal clear that Jesus alone is the only way to God when he stated: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

In the Bible when people tried to give Mary special honor because she was Jesus' mother, Jesus corrected them:

As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you." He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it" (Luke 11:27-28).

The RCC supports the veneration or worship of Mary with a number of other doctrines about Mary because they place authoritative RCC pronouncements on the same level as the Bible in terms of final spiritual authority. These doctrines are listed below along with what the Bible has to say about them:

Roman Catholic Church

The sinlessness of Mary – She was free from every personal sin during her lifetime (declared by the Council of Trent, 1545-1563).

Immaculate Conception of Mary – She was free from the taint of original sin (declared by papal decree in 1854).

Bodily assumption of Mary – She ascended to heaven without seeing the corruption of death (declared by papal decree in 1950).

Mediatorship of Mary – She is a channel for application of all grace as co-redeemer with Jesus (declared by papal decree in 1854). Remember that by the RCC doctrine of justification one must have not only the work of Christ on the cross but also the continual infusion of further grace to complete salvation which can come through Mary. Consider for example the statement of Pope Leo XIII in a papal decree:

Nothing whatever of that immense treasure of all graces, which the Lord brought us. . . is granted to us save through Mary, so that, just as no one can come to the Father on high except through the Son, so almost in the same manner, no one can come to Christ except through his Mother.¹

The Bible

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

Jesus was the only person without sin: *How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God (Hebrews 9:14a).*

The Bible states that Mary knew she needed a Savior: *And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (Luke 1:46-47).*

There is no biblical reference to the bodily assumption of Mary. Besides Jesus' ascension, the Bible only records that Enoch and Elijah were taken up to heaven (Genesis 6:24; 2 Kings 2:1-18).

For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

*Christ Fellowship's views on this subject are guided by the authoritative Word of God.
Not all biblical references in the Word of God relating to each principle are listed.
Biblical references quoted are from the New International Version (NIV) 2011 unless otherwise noted.*