

8

Yes, the Orthodox are “Bible believing” Christians

Almost everything within Orthodox worship comes directly from the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. There is probably more Bible read on a single Sunday Morning in Orthodox Worship than in an entire year in most other churches.

9

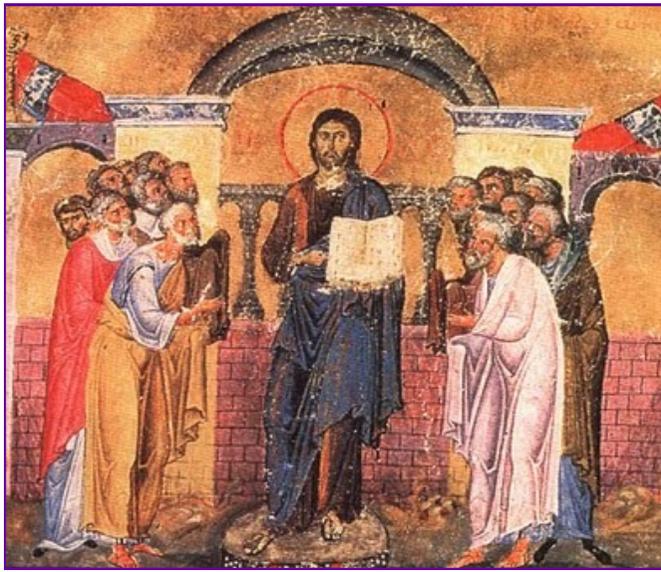
Orthodox Christianity is not an exotic form of Roman Catholicism

While both Churches have organized worship, the life, practice and doctrine of the Roman Catholics and The Orthodox are quite different. The Orthodox view the Pope as the bishop of Rome, not a supreme leader of the entire Church. And, because, in the eyes of the Orthodox, the Pope has stated that his authority is over the *entire* Church, The Orthodox are not currently in communion with Rome. Roman Catholic doctrinal principles such as the Immaculate Conception of Mary, Papal Infallibility, Transubstantiation of Holy Communion, and Original Sin are absent from the Orthodox Church. These perspectives took root in the Roman Catholic Church *after* East and West went their separate ways.

10

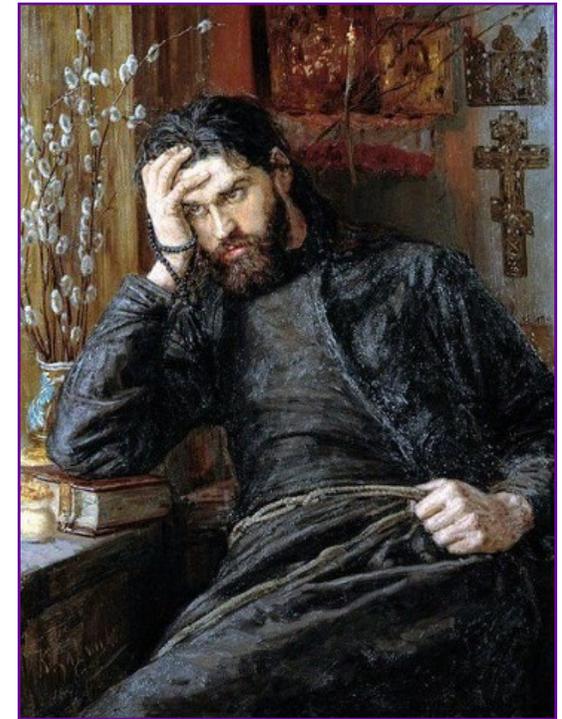
Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, is the head of the Orthodox Church

Not Luther, not Calvin, not Wesley. The Orthodox Church can trace the lineage of the ordinations of its clergy all the way back to Christ Himself with unbroken continuity. Orthodox Christianity has remained faithful to Christ not only doctrinally but also historically.



With these things said, The Orthodox are not trying to convert you. We believe in tolerance of other religions, and this has been written so that those of you who may come from other backgrounds might be more tolerant of us. Please don't write us off. Learn what we really think, do and believe before deciding without sufficient knowledge. We're believers. We don't preach false doctrine. We accept the Bible as the Word of God. Simply put, we struggle within the boundaries of the Church to always be as good of an expression of the Kingdom of God on Earth as possible. This is because Christ created one Church and prayed that It would remain one. We believe it is our sacred duty to preserve this oneness. We are not allowed to whimsically create a new church whenever we are upset. If we don't like what's happening in our Church, we don't leave. We risk persecution, even to death, to protect the faith because that's what Christ did when He created The Church.

10 Things Orthodox Christians Would Like You to Know



Holy Ascension Orthodox Christian Mission

www.ascensionorthodox.org

1

We don't worship Mary

We hold her in a place of esteem because of her singularly unique role as the birth-giver of Jesus Christ. Orthodox Christians state and affirm over and over again throughout the worship services that God alone is the only One to whom worship is due.

2

We don't worship icons

Icons are like a family photo album. Just as in our own families, where we keep the pictures of our loved ones who have departed this life on shelves and hanging on walls, we also keep the pictures of the members of our larger Christian family around, particularly those members of our Christian family who have led exemplary lives. The word icon only means "image" or "picture."

3

Holy Tradition

When we talk about tradition, we don't mean the traditions of men, we mean Holy Tradition. The traditions that the Church has taught have always been those that have been led by the Spirit. It was the tradition of the Church that gave us the New Testament and, the New Testament also continues to inform that tradition. It is cyclical and not mutually exclusive.



4

Orthodox Christianity is not "works" based

It always takes the grace and will of God to bring about our salvation. We do good works because it is the outpouring of the joy that we experience through living Christ-centered lives and because it is an expression of righteous living and of love for God and neighbor. There are no "points" earned by doing good works.

5

There's no such thing as the Byzantine Empire

This was a term invented by French scholars retroactively during the renaissance. St Constantine moved the capital of the empire to the East and Constantinople became known as New Rome. Though portions of the Western half of the Roman Empire fell, the Eastern half continued for over a thousand years after the Goths sacked Rome. Those living in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire did not think of themselves as "Byzantines" or even Greeks. They were Romans. Even today, the Turks still refer to Orthodox Christians living in Turkey as "Roman."

6

The Orthodox Church was not invented or created by Emperor Constantine Great

"True" Christianity did not disappear when the Church received legal recognition from the Roman Government. Faithful, pious and righteous Christians continued to live in faith and suffer martyrdom and persecution. The Church that was founded by Jesus Christ, and its theology, remained intact.

Those who became frustrated with government intervention in Church life struggled to maintain the purity of the church's doctrine and life. However, since the Church continued to adhere to its basic teachings without dilution, it was necessary for pious believers to continue their struggle *within* the church. It was believed that no person had the right to create or invent his or her own church. It is also significant to mention that the Orthodox Church continues to bear much fruit. If losing one's life, or martyrdom, is the ultimate expression of one's devotion to Christ, there has never been a more fruitful time within the Church. There were more Christian martyrs in the 20th century than all previous centuries of Christian history **combined**. Most of these martyrs were Orthodox Christians who refused to renounce their faith.

7

The Orthodox Church is simply The Church

The Orthodox Church is not a denomination nor is it "non-denominational." It is pre-denominational. The Church was without break or separation for more than 1,000 years. The Orthodox Church did not break away from any other group. The Orthodox Church continued right along up to this day. In fact, groups that refer to themselves as "non-denominational" because they are free standing churches, not connected with any larger mainline protestant confessions, **are**, in fact, denominations. Since a denomination means a breaking down of the whole or a separation, they are simply denominations consisting of one parish.