

EASTERN ORTHODOXY

A. Basic Facts & History of Eastern Orthodoxy

1. *Members*: Of the _____ billion professing Christians in the world, Eastern Orthodoxy (EO) is the second largest denomination with an estimated _____ million members, concentrated mostly in eastern nations (Greek, Russian, Romanian, Serbian, Syrian Orthodox, etc.).
2. *Origin*: Like the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), EO claims an _____ of succession from the apostles to its bishops; but in reality, EO _____ over the centuries through a mixture of error with the truth and unbelievers with believers in the professing church (Matt. 7:21-23; 13:31-43; Acts 15:1-2; 2 Cor. 11:26; Gal. 2:4-5; 1 Tim. 4:1-3), including the development of the:
 - priesthood (Matt. 23:8-12; 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10)
 - monarchical system (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-7; 1 Peter 5:1-3)
 - Patriarchs & Pentarchy (Luke 22:25-30)
3. *Great Schism*: In AD _____, the Patriarch of Constantinople was excommunicated by the Bishop of Rome (Pope), dividing the Eastern Orthodox Church from the Western/Roman Catholic Church.
 - *What was the filioque controversy about? (John 15:26-27)*

B. Beliefs and Practices of Eastern Orthodoxy

1. Areas of Biblical Agreement

- a. *Jesus Christ* – two natures (fully human and fully God) in one person, virgin born, sinless, risen from dead, Savior of the world, and returning as the judge of the living and the dead
- b. *Trinity* – three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in the one being who is God
- c. *Scripture* – God’s Word, an authoritative source of church truth as part of tradition
- d. *Mankind* – created in God’s image, ancestral sin (but not original sin/guilt), grace for salvation
- e. *Angels* – holy angels, demons, afterlife of heaven or hell (no purgatory)

2. Areas of Biblical Disagreement

- a. *Tradition*: EO bases its beliefs and practices on church tradition, which they say includes Scripture, Liturgy, the Seven Ecumenical Councils, Later Councils, writings of the Fathers, and Canon Law. (Mark 7:1-13; Col. 2:8, 22; 1 Peter 1:18).
- b. *Scripture*: EO rejects *Sola Scriptura* (Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 3:17) and has a broader Old Testament canon than both Protestantism and Roman Catholicism.

- c. *Church*: EO teaches that it is infallible (has never erred); it is the only true church, outside of which there is no salvation; it anathematizes all others and requires renunciation by converts at chrismation.
- d. *Sacraments*: EO currently recognizes and practices the same seven sacraments as RC (with chrismation the name for confirmation), and they are considered outward signs of inward saving grace (Rom. 11:6).
- e. *Salvation*: EO rejects biblical teaching on salvation with respect to:
- original sin and guilt (Rom. 5:15-18)
 - penal substitutionary atonement (Isa. 53:4-6, 10-11; Gal. 3:10-13; Col. 2:13-15)
 - forgiveness and justification vs. sanctification (Rom. 4:4-6; 5:1-2; 8:30; 1 Cor. 3:1-4; 6:9-11)
 - grace through faith, apart from works (Rom. 4:4-6; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5)
 - *Did some eastern “fathers” in early church history say salvation is by “faith alone”?*
 - assurance and eternal security (John 10:28-29; Rom. 4:16; 8:38-39; 1 John 5:13)
 - *What is “theosis” and how does it compare with Scripture? (Exod. 20:3; Isa. 43:10; 44:6, 8; 45:5, 14, 21-22; 46:9; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; Gal. 4:8; 1 Tim. 1:17; 2:5; Jude 25)*
- f. *Spirituality & Worship*: EO worship and spirituality involves veneration of relics (Num. 21:8-9; 2 Kings 18:4); keeping feast days (Gal. 4:10; Col. 2:16-17); asceticism & monasticism (Col. 2:20-23); repetitious, rote prayer/Jesus Prayer (1 Kings 18:26-27; Matt. 6:7); Hesychast mysticism & elitism (2 Cor. 11:3-4); and the use of icons.
- *What was the iconoclast controversy? (Exod. 20:4-5)*
 - *Are icons merely venerated or actually worshiped if devotees bow and kneel before them (2 Kings 17:35; Ps. 95:6), kiss them (Job 31:24-28; Ps. 2:12; Hos. 13:2), burn incense before them (1 Kings 3:3; 11:8; 12:33; 13:2; 22:43), and pray before them (Ps. 115:4-8; 1 Tim. 2:5)?*
 - *According to biblical usage is latria (Lat.)/latreuō (Gr., Luke 4:8) worship to God alone but dulia (Lat.)/duleuō (Gr., Matt. 6:24; 1 Thess. 1:9) and proskynesis/prokyneō (John 4:24; Acts 10:25-26; Rev. 22:8-9) merely veneration permitted to humans and angels?*
- g. *Saints, Angels, & Mary*: EO promotes prayer to saints and angels to seek their intercession, especially of Mary, who is viewed as: sinless during her earthly life (Rom. 3:9-10, 12, 19); a perpetual virgin (Ps. 69:8); the Mother of God (*Theotokos*, Luke 1:47); Mediator of salvation (1 Tim. 2:5), who was assumed bodily into heaven at her death.
- *How does EO differ from RC in its teaching on Mary?*