

3 Eastern Orthodoxy



A Message from the Lutheran Confessions

Our churches teach that since the fall of Adam [Romans 5:12], all who are naturally born are born with sin [Psalm 51:5], that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with the inclination to sin, called concupiscence. Concupiscence is a disease and original vice that is truly sin. It damns and

brings eternal death on those who are not born anew through Baptism and the Holy Spirit [John 3:5]. (AC II 1)

Opening Prayer

L: Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. (Psalm 51:5)

P: None is righteous, no, not one. (Romans 3:10)

L: Grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death,

P: Grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:20–21)

L: Open our eyes, O Lord, that we may behold wondrous things out of Your Word.

P: Amen!

Original Sin

If there is still a portion of you that has retained a part—even a small part—of God’s grace, how much of you needs to be redeemed by Jesus? Asked another way, what does the Orthodox denial of original sin say about Christ’s work on the cross?

What do the following passages from the Bible have to say about Christ and His work for you?

Isaiah 48:11

Hebrews 12:2

Revelation 22:13

According to **Ephesians 2:1–5**, does the problem of sin consist merely of a darkening of the mind and an impairment of the will, or does the problem run a bit deeper?

In what way do **Romans 5:10** and **Romans 8:7** add to the picture of original sin?

In what way might the Orthodox denial of original sin tempt you to trust in something other than Christ alone for your salvation?

Our Source

In what way do the following Bible verses seem to support the Orthodox idea that a person must cooperate with God in working for his or her salvation?

1 Corinthians 3:9

Philippians 2:12

James 2:14–20

According to the following verses, what is the source of our strength or ability to “work out our salvation” and participate in good works?

Galatians 2:20

Philippians 2:13

1 Thessalonians 2:13

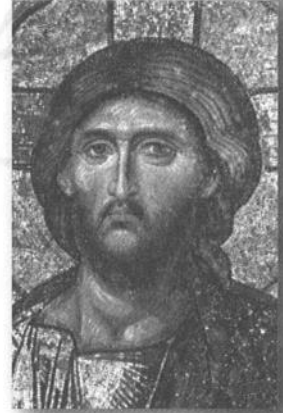
In what way do the preceding Bible verses help shape your understanding of **Matthew 25:31–46**? For additional help, read **Hebrews 11:6**.

Which offers you more comfort and certainty of salvation: the Orthodox idea that you must contribute something from within yourself, or the Bible’s teaching that God Himself lives and works in you and through you?

Church Body

Eastern Orthodox Churches

(Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America,
the Orthodox Church in America)



History

The Eastern Orthodox Church arose following the split between East and West in 1054 due to doctrinal and political strife. Geographic and language isolation developed the Orthodox Church along nationalistic lines. The Greek (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America) and Russian (Orthodox Church in America) divisions are the primary groups in the United States.

Vital Statistics

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America has 1.5 million members, while the Orthodox Church in America has 1 million; overall there are 250 million Orthodox believers worldwide. The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese is headquartered in New York City, with eight metropolises in New Jersey, Chicago, Atlanta, Detroit, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Boston, and Denver. The Orthodox Church in America has its headquarters in Syosset, New York. Note that the Orthodox Church does not celebrate Easter at the same time as the Western Church. Sources: www.oca.org; www.goarch.org.

Source of Doctrine

The Orthodox Church accepts the Scriptures, including select apocryphal books (Tobit, Judith, Sirach, and others). They also include oral traditions of Christ and His apostles. Eastern Orthodox churches teach that tradition completes and explains Scripture. The teachings of the church as a whole are placed on the same level as Scripture.

Role of Christ/Way of Salvation

Orthodoxy teaches that man is fallen and corrupt, but not dead in sin. It believes that our will cooperates with God in bringing about conversion and faith. It also teaches that, while Christ died for our salvation, the believer contributes to his or her justification through good works.

Sacraments

Like the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church teaches seven sacraments, though with a few distinct differences. While Baptism is performed on infants, it involves a threefold immersion. Chrismation (Confirmation) involves anointing with oil and is accompanied by the Eucharist. Holy Communion uses leavened bread since they believe that is what Jesus used. The Orthodox Church practices intinction, where the bread is dipped into wine and given to the worshiper on a spoon.

Lutheran Response

Like the Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church shares many of our beliefs. However, we have serious differences in our understanding of the sacraments and the worship of the saints. Approach Orthodox believers with a thorough understanding of the Scriptures and what we teach.