

The Pope

Introduction:

- 1) **Matt. 23:6-12** may serve as a good introduction to our sermon today.
- 2) A few weeks ago you could not miss the wall to wall coverage of the final hours of Pope John Paul II and then the selection of a new pope.
- 3) As I watched some of this, I was amazed at some of the statements made by reporters and anchors, politicians, theologians, Catholics, and non-Catholics alike.
- 4) Biblical and historical ignorance abounded and I want to explore just a little of that today.

I. THE BIBLE KNOWS NOTHING OF A POPE.

A. No Bible Authority for the Office.

1. Before considering that, let's define a few terms.
 - a. Pope is from the Latin for father. Catholicism considers the pope the spiritual father of all the "faithful."
 - b. Pontiff is also from Latin and means to make a bridge. Reflects the belief that the pope mediates between God and men.
 - c. Vicar of Christ means that the pope is viewed as standing in the place of and with the authority of Christ on earth.
2. No man has the right to be called father in a spiritual sense. **Matt. 23:9-12**
 - a. Some counter with, "What about teacher?"
 - 1) Jesus does not forbid describing what a person does, i.e. teach, preach, lead a song, etc.
 - 2) But He does forbid elevating one above another.
 - b. Everything about the papacy goes against what Jesus said in **Matt. 20:25-28**.
3. No man is needed to bridge the gap, for Christ has done that. **1 Tim. 2:1-5**
4. Christ is spoken of as head of the church and no vicar is ever mentioned. **Eph. 5:22f**

B. NT Bishops Had Local Authority.

1. The pope is head of the Roman Catholic Church by virtue of being elected bishop of Rome and the bishop of Rome is regarded as the universal bishop.
2. The pope does not meet the qualifications for a NT bishop. **1 Tim. 3:1-5**
3. Bishops and elders were the same in the NT. **Titus 1:5-7**
4. These elders/bishops were always plural in number and had authority within a local church only. **Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28**

C. Peter Was Not the First Pope.

1. Since no one is ever called pope in the NT, Peter most certainly was not.
2. Peter could not have been chosen today. **Matt. 8:14f**
3. The promises of “binding and loosing” given to Peter in **Matt. 16:16-19** were given to the other disciples in **Matt. 18:18-20**.
4. Peter did not behave like a modern pope. **Acts 10:24-26**
5. Paul did not treat Peter as a pope. **Gal. 2:11-14**

II. THE DEAD HEAD.

1. For several days the head of the Roman Catholic Church was virtually comatose and then for two weeks, the head was dead.
2. I do not mean any ridicule, but the same points the Hebrew writer made about Jesus in contrast to the Jewish priest can be made regarding the pope.
 - a. Death does not prevent His serving. **Heb. 7:20-24**
 - b. He always lives to make intercession. **Heb. 7:25**
 - c. His sacrifice only needed to be made once. **Heb. 7:26-28; 9:24-26**
 - 1) No need for a priest to repeat the “miracle of the mass.”
3. Don’t turn to a priesthood as flawed as that of Judaism. Enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus. **Heb. 10:19-23**

III. UNCHANGEABLE TRUTH.

A. The Election Process.

1. After a period of mourning, the cardinals (another office unknown to Scripture) met in a conclave to elect a new pope.
2. Church officials proclaimed that the Holy Spirit would guide the cardinals in choosing the right pope, but it took several votes to reach agreement.
 - a. Would any argue that the Holy Spirit was undecided?
3. Many Catholics, including some bishops and cardinals, expressed a desire for a pope who would change the direction of the Church.
 - a. Truth, as supposedly expressed by the popes, is seen as changeable.
4. They didn’t get it at this time, but it will probably come.
 - a. Mass is no longer in Latin; can eat meat on Fridays; no longer speak of limbo for those dying in infancy; etc.

B. The Folly of a Changing Standard.

1. Catholics (and the world) are told that the pope is a blessing as the Holy Spirit chooses him and assists him in guiding the church.
2. But down through the years popes have changed doctrines, excommunicated previous popes, condemned Galileo, burned Joan of Arc and then decided she was a saint, bought and sold the office, fathered illegitimate children, etc.
3. Can it not be pointed out that all men make mistakes? Could different things ever be taught from this pulpit?
 - a. The great difference is that we make no claims to being led of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. Catholics are obligated under penalty of excommunication to follow papal decrees which may change tomorrow.
4. How much better it is to follow the incorruptible word of God. **1 Pet. 1:22-25**
5. Roman Catholicism is founded on the fundamental failure, repeated by some Protestant churches, to recognize that all truth was promised to the apostles almost 2,000 years ago. **John 16:12, 13**
 - a. It is our duty to come to know the truth revealed in the first century and not wait on more truth to be revealed. **John 8:31, 32**

Conclusion:

- 1) Why have I made what some would call “anti-Catholic” statements?
- 2) Nothing I have taught today has been taught out of animosity toward anyone, but we must recognize some vital truths.
 - a) The Holy Spirit warned that apostasy would happen. **1 Tim. 4:1-3**
 - b) Christians are obligated to examine carefully everything that is taught. **1 John 4:1**
- 3) I want to guard myself against falling away; I want to keep others from doing so; and I want to be able to help those who are entangled in it already.
- 4) Today, would you listen to the unchangeable truth and purify your soul by being obedient to it?
1 Pet. 1:22