
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **What is the correct way to choose a new Pope?**

On February 28, 2013 Pope Benedict XVI stepped down from being the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church. His reign as Pope lasted about two months shy of eight years. Pope Benedict XVI retired citing health reasons. He felt he was too feeble and tired to continue performing his duties as the Pope. This was the first time in 600 years that a Pope resigned his office.

After Benedict's resignation, it became time to choose a new Pope. There are 207 Cardinals worldwide, but only 115 of them are allowed to vote. These 115 Cardinals gather in the Sistine Chapel which stands inside the walls of the Vatican City. The Papal Conclave is held wherein the 115 Cardinals will vote. To become a new Pope, one man must receive a two-thirds majority vote.

USA Today reports the following after the first round of voting on March 12, 2013:

Black smoke poured from a chimney at the Vatican's Sistine Chapel late Tuesday, signaling that a new pope had not been elected in the first round of voting by a conclave of cardinals.

The 115 cardinals will reconvene Wednesday and are scheduled to hold four votes each day until two-thirds of their ballots bear the name of the same man.

No new pope was no surprise — a pope has not been elected on the first ballot in centuries.

After each vote, the Vatican will release smoke from a chapel chimney. Black smoke means no two-thirds majority, so no new pope. White smoke means we have a winner. Many hundreds braved the rain and cold in St. Peter's Square on Tuesday to see the almost-inevitable black smoke that signaled the end of Day One of the conclave.

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/03/11/papal-conclave-day-one/1978701/> (accessed 3/18/13).

Now, here is the question we're asking on Bible Talk this week: **What is the correct way to choose a Pope? What does the Bible say?**

I'm going to read to you what the Bible says about choosing a Pope. Are you ready to hear what the Bible says. Here it is: **NOTHING!** The Bible says absolutely nothing about how to choose a Pope because the Bible is silent about Popes, papal conclaves, and other innovations brought in by the Catholic Church.

Here is the difference between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lord's church found in the Bible: **In the Bible, the head of the Lord's church was not a man – but the Lord Himself.**

Colossians 1:18

18 And [Jesus] is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

Jesus is the head of the church. Jesus is the one with the preeminence – not a man.

The idea of men casting votes in a secret conclave for several days until a two-thirds majority vote is taken has absolutely no divine authority whatsoever. This practice originated with uninspired men. Although it is a practice which has been around for centuries, it is still without divine authority – no matter how long it has been practiced.

Furthermore, the Roman Catholic Church is not concerned that they have no scripture for what they are practicing, because the Roman Catholic Church believes the Pope has supreme authority in the church – not the scriptures. Let me say that again so there is no misunderstanding about what I'm saying: **The Roman Catholic Church teaches the Pope has supreme authority over the church – not the scriptures.** The Roman Catholic Church pays only lip-service to the scriptures.

- On the one hand, they say they believe in the Bible.
- But they do not believe each man has the right to read the Bible for himself and from his own reading reach conclusions different from the Roman Catholic Church.
- The only official interpretation allowed is the interpretation which the Roman Catholic Church hands down.
- Therefore, the Pope and his official interpretation are the supreme authority in the Roman Catholic Church – not the scriptures themselves.

The Roman Catholic Church does not believe the Pope and the Church are subject to the scriptures. Rather, they believe the scriptures are subject to the Pope and the Church.

This being the case: When the average person reads Col 1:18 and draws the conclusion that Jesus is the head of the church and that Jesus should have the preeminence, that average

person has no right to draw such a conclusion. Instead, according to the Roman Catholic Church, everyone must accept the official conclusion from the Pope which is: **Jesus is not the sole head of the church; Jesus shares His throne with the Pope and the Pope is as authoritative as Jesus Himself.**

Now I realize the Roman Catholic Church will not say these things so plainly, but what we have just studied is the essence of what the Roman Catholic Church teaches.

In conclusion:

- There is no Bible way of choosing a new Pope.
- The Pope is not the head of the church – Jesus is the only head.
- The ultimate authority for the church are the scriptures.
- An official interpretation of the scriptures – given by the Pope ends up making the Pope the ultimate authority, not the scriptures. This is simply wrong – it is sinful.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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