

Friday, May 19, 2017 - Vatican City has no standing

The news cycle the last 24 hours has centered on President Trump's trip to Israel, Saudi Arabia and Vatican City. These sites are being touted as the 'headquarters' or 'home' of the Jewish, Muslim and Christian religions respectively. I can't speak and won't speak to the headquarters of false, man-made religions, but as it relates to Christianity, Vatican City, the blasphemous, man-made position of pope and the Roman Catholic church denomination never have and never will have ANYTHING in common with Christianity.

Catholicism is a false religion. Catholicism is a corruption of the Lord's church. It is a manifestation of that great departure from the faith of which Paul warned about in both 2 Thessalonians 2 and 1 Timothy 4. As such, the one who claims to be the head of this false religion, the pope, is nothing more than a false teacher doing the work of satan to deceive millions around the world.

The Roman Catholic system, with its autocratic papal dynasty, did not suddenly appear in a given year of history. Rather, it was a result of a gradual apostasy from the original Faith. Paul declared: "The Spirit speaks expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith ..." (1 Tim. 4:1). He details some of the traits of this movement, e.g., forbidding to marry, commanding to abstain from meats, etc. (1-4). The many corruptions of the divine teachings – changes in the plan of redemption (e.g., sprinkling, infant baptism, etc.), alteration of worship (e.g., the mass, the veneration of Mary, etc.) – were progressively implemented. Catholicism evolved as a defection from the original faith.

The pope is called "Holy Father" by millions around the world, yet there is nothing holy about him or the position. The pope deserves no such reverence. Christians must never feel pressured into honoring any human being in the way we honor God. There is only one Holy Father (Ephesians 4:6), and no man should expect to be called by that name in a religious context (Matthew 23:9).

He feigns religiousness and righteousness, but his true character reveals that he is diabolic. His activity actually is "according to the working of Satan" (2 Thes. 2:9). The beginnings of the papacy were sown in the apostle's time. Idolatry had invaded the church (1 Cor. 10:14), even in the worship of angels (Col. 2:18). Handling the word of God deceitfully (2 Cor. 4:2) had begun; strife and division were affecting the church (1 Cor. 3:3). Gospel truth was sacrificed for the sake of money (1 Tim. 6:5; Tit. 1:11) – compare the practice of "simony" in Catholicism, i.e., the purchase of church offices. Distinctions were made regarding meats (1 Cor. 8:8), and human traditions were creeping into the church (Col. 2:23). Certain men were beginning to exert superiority and to flex their "religious muscles" (3 John 9, 10).

When Christ established His church in the first century (A.D. 30; Acts 2), "He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors [i.e., bishops or elders] and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11). Jesus never elevated one bishop over others, but rather established an equable office for service. Sadly, man deviated from the original biblical pattern in search of power, honor, and praise. The first indication of this deviation was the distinction among the terms "bishops," "elders," and "pastors"—titles which the New Testament writers used interchangeably (Acts 20:17,28; Titus 1:5,7; 1 Peter 5:1-4). The title "Bishop" was given more significance and applied to only one man who was given sole authority over a local congregation, unlike bishops

during apostolic times (Acts 14:23; 15:4; 20:17; Titus 1:5; James 5:14). Soon, the "Bishop" ruled over not only one congregation, but over a "diocese," several congregations in a city or an entire district. Out of these attitudes and actions, the papacy finally was born.

Catholicism claims many things for itself:

1. The Catholic Church holds "herself to be mother of all the children separated from her (all denominations-and churches of Christ also).
2. All Christendom is subject to the Pope of Rome.
3. Anyone baptized by a group outside the Church, even though they reject her, automatically become a Catholic.
4. Protestant groups will be tolerated until they are brought under the umbrella of Catholicism.
5. The Bible only is not enough; the "Living Church" (Pope and hierarchy) must rule on the same level of authority as the scriptures.

The list could go on and on. What Catholicism shows is the arrogance of the papacy which has existed since its origin.

Consider the following:

"The pope doeth whatsoever he listeth [wills], even things unlawful, and is more than God". That is the very essence of lawlessness. The papacy opposes God. Surely anyone who claims to be "more than God" cannot be described otherwise than as an enemy of the Almighty.

The pope claims that whereas Christ is the head of the church in heaven, the papacy is the head of the church on earth. Yet Jesus affirmed that he possessed "all authority ... in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18). Jesus does not share "headship" with the pope.

The papacy usurps the place of God by:

- Making claims that belong only to deity – "Our Lord God the pope; another God upon the earth, king of kings, and lord of lords" (Newton, p. 456).
- Accepting adoration not proper for a man. Men bow before the papal dignitary, kiss his feet, ring, etc. Contrast the disposition of Peter when Cornelius bowed before him (Acts 10:25, 26).

Presuming to act for God in matters pertaining exclusively to deity, e.g., offering forgiveness of sins. For example, in Catholic doctrine, Absolution is a "judicial act whereby a priest remits the sins of a penitent who has contrition, has made confession and promises satisfaction." Contrast that with Peter's instructions to Simon in Acts 8. Simon, after he had been baptized, sinned by assuming money could purchase him powers that God had bestowed upon those of His choosing. Peter rebukes him and states, "Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you."

Much more could be said but suffice it to say the papacy means nothing in the realm of the New Testament church. Unfortunately, he is just a man that decided to play God and delivers millions of souls to Satan on a yearly basis. There is no biblical basis on which to defend the papacy. To accept Catholicism is to accept a religion built upon a man-

made foundation, which is unstable and one day will collapse. To accept a foundation other than Christ, is to usurp His God-given role as the Head of the church which He bought with His own blood (Acts 20:28). Paul wrote, "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11).

The only legitimate response to Catholicism is a return to the New Testament, and to the first-century New Testament church which predated both Catholicism and Protestant denominationalism. Let us obey the same gospel, become members of the same church, without any denominational or sectarian affiliation, proclaim the same plan of salvation, and become precisely what they were-without addition, subtraction, or modification-just Christians, members of the body of Christ, nothing more, nothing less.

President Trump should spend his time in the local gathering of the Lord's body if he wants to learn about true Christianity.