



Sunday – Sept 10, 2023

The Lakeland Hills Leader

Lakeland Hills church of Christ

2510 Lakeland Hills Blvd
Lakeland, FL 33805
(863) 688-4336

Schedule of Services

Sunday

9:00 AM Bible Study
9:50 AM Worship
6:00 PM Worship

Wednesday

7:00 PM Bible Study

Visit our Website:

www.lakelandhillschurchofchrist.com

For Sermon & Class outlines,
Bible Study Materials and
Other Information.

Visit our Facebook Page:

www.facebook.com/LakelandHillschurchofchrist for events,
information, and links to our
YouTube Archives

Visit us on YouTube:

www.youtube.com/channel/UCu7AG_3jUtpBDlr2NPqB3iw for
Live Streams and Video
Archives.

Elders

Bob Marschall
Leon Miller
Larry Wisdom

Deacons

Bucky Day
Sherman Johnson
Michael Sadler
David Williams

Evangelist

Chuck Kozens

WHY DON'T WE HAVE A POPE?

By David Weeks

People exhibit a disturbing desire to follow the crowd. Even New Testament Christians can be poisoned with this worldly desire.

In the days of the judges, when Eli's sons were evil, the people saw the kings that other nations had as the answer to their troubles, so they asked God for one (1 Sam. 8:5). God gave the people a king like they asked, and He told them their request would end in disaster (vs. 9-18). The people ignored God's warning and embraced their new rulers (vs. 19).

Why didn't Israel have a king to begin with? Because God didn't want them to have one. He wanted His people to follow the leadership that He gave them.

Now, let us take a leap forward in time, and we find ourselves facing a denominational landscape that is vastly different than God designed for the Lord's church. One of the elements of God's design is for there to be a plurality of qualified elders in every local church (Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Tim. 3:1-7). The denominations appoint one man per congregation to be the "pastor." Often the pastor is an unseasoned youth, and he often isn't married. Nothing about the pastor system is scriptural, but it appeals to people. Denominational people think it is strange that there isn't something similar among us. In their confusion, sectarians routinely call gospel preachers "pastor." They are just sure we must be.

At the far reaches of the pastor system is the papacy of Catholicism, and the Archbishop of the Anglican Church. Functionally, both the pope and the Archbishop occupy the same role in their respective denominations. They are the head, and they rule over all of their people as the final authority.

It would be naïve to think that some members of the Lord's church wouldn't like having a "pastor system" or a pope. So many Christians were converted out of the denominations, and others are uninformed about the Bible pattern of authority. History has shown us that brethren in Christ are sometimes charmed by the "green grass" over the denominational fences. Some churches of Christ now have instrumental music in addition to vocal music (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Some churches have social programs as their main body of work, because among sectarians, this is commonplace. The work of the church is spiritual, and involves the preaching of the gospel (1 Tim. 3:15). Nothing in the New Testament makes feeding and clothing the world our work, but to some brethren it seems like it should be.

So, why do we not have a pope? First, because it is unbiblical. God didn't assign us a pope or "chief elder." There is no such thing as a "vicar of Christ" in the scriptures. Jesus alone is the head of the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). Jesus condemned the practice of elevating mere men to the status of spiritual fathers (Mt. 23:9). The papacy is the rejection of Christ as head. Any attempt among us to install

A mere man would be different. The pope's word not the Lord's word is law in Catholicism. This must never be allowed to see the light of day in the Lord's church.

Finally, we have no pope because Catholicism itself shows us that such a deviation from God's design would be an absolute disaster. As the kings ruined Israel, a pope or similar "head" would ruin the church. He would be nothing more than the Big-Chief "wolf in sheep's clothing." (Mt. 7:15). A pope ruling God's people would demand the same allegiance as the Catholic pope does. People would inevitably give it to him, leaving Christ's headship out of the picture. The church would be destroyed and be left a smoldering heap of ruin in the blind-man's ditch (Mt. 15:14).

Brethren, understand that nothing good has ever come from the existence of the pastor system or its full-bore version, the papacy. The papacy is the height of apostasy. The Lord's church is perfect as God designed it. When qualified men lead with the New Testament as their law, we are all led to heaven. A pope would lead us all to hell.